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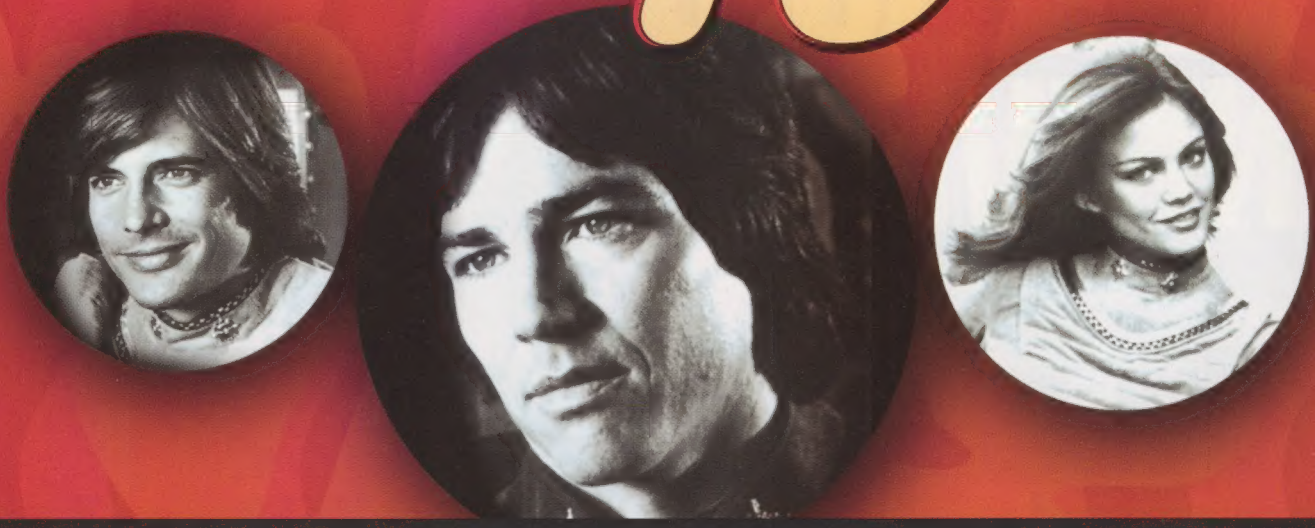
Who knew the future would look so much like the '70s?



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INSIDE

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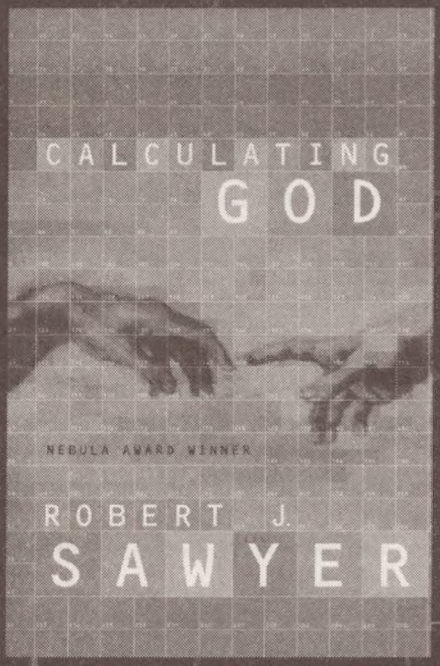

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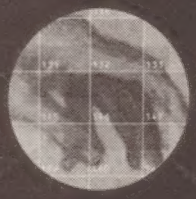

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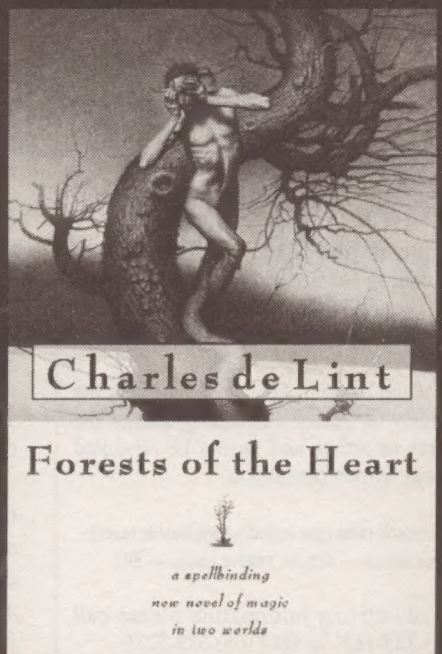

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Damn @#^&!! bureaucrats

In the nebulous matter feature you will see an item pertaining to Solaris, the French-language speculative fiction publication based in Quebec.

Like other small press publications in Canada, Solaris received financial assistance from the federal government. For the record, we don't. This gives us a bit of leeway to mouth off and criticize the process, as well as the Canada Council and its juries for their supposed high-handedness. If you look to the left, you will see our disdain for the federal government's cultural mavens (in fact, the ever-changing slogan has become a regular feature for us)

To be honest, Parsec applied for funding in its first year of eligibility — like all fledgling operations capital, any capital, was welcome — but we failed to pass the process. It was also the last time we ever put ourselves through the lunacy. It's a costly, time-consuming and maddening application process that offers no guarantee of success or even a coherent explanation of why you failed.

Canada Council did supply a list of jurors who decided funding levels for successful applicants. Among the list were museum curators, artists and a poet — hardly people with the experience needed to judge the needs of a publication or to determine the merits of speculative fiction.

Indeed, this latter point has been raised by other speculative fiction publishers such as On Spec.

When Solaris lost its funding after years of declining support, there was a real fear that On Spec would also be whacked by the cultural mavens in Ottawa.

As Jena Synder wrote in a letter to SF Canada, there is a strong sense that science fiction, fantasy and horror is not considered literature by the bureaucrats and their hatchetmen, err, sorry, their juries

Such an attitude would make it very easy for juries to deny or reduce funding for speculative fiction publications.

There is also the traditional Catch-22 aspect to the debate.

In discussing the loss of funding on the SF Canada website Solaris editor Joel Champetier, explained that past juries had been increasingly demanding in terms of improving the quality of Solaris.

Nevermind, that they were less than straightforward in explaining what type of improvements they wanted (Solaris, by the way, is a top-notch high-quality product). By making such demands at the same time that they are reducing funds to the publication just demonstrates the contradictory nature of such boards.

In addition, in order to receive Canada Council grants, a publication has to accept limits on the amount of advertising dollars it accepts.

So, let's recap...

The government gives you less money. restricts your other revenue sources and tells you to invest more in the publication and in its contributors.

Like all other government math, it doesn't add up.

To Joel's and the other members of Solaris's staff credit, they took up the challenge and adapted to the new realities.

Bravo.

☆ ☆ ☆

Before I forget, I would like to thank our readers,contributors, advertisers and other supporters who have helped us during the past five years. The ranks of these people are just too numerous to list without running the risk of leaving someone out.

Suffice to say that meeting each of you has been the best part of launching and operating this magazine.

These are professional relationships which Donna and I cherish and look forward to continuing in the years ahead.

Til next time
Chris

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Feds knee-cap Solaris

The Canada Council — the nation's cultural mavens — has cut funding for the Quebec-based speculative fiction magazine, Solaris.

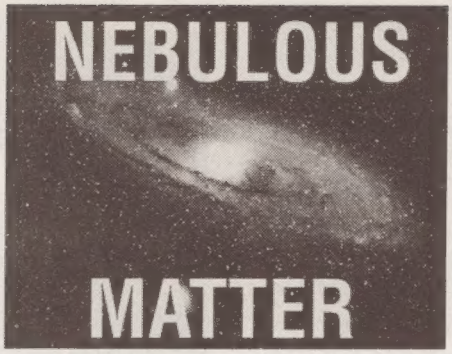
Although the council and its jury has been reducing its support of Solaris during recent years (last year it was just $4,000), the latest decision could have spelt the end of the publication — COULD have.

According to editor Joel Champetier, Solaris is still very alive.

"A crisis is a time of change, so we went forward with a project we had from a long time," he told Parsec.

Under the project, Solaris will change its format to digest-sized with issue 134 in August.

Members of the science fiction community are asked to voice their dissatisfaction with the jurying process faced by science fiction publications (Solaris isn't alone in facing this problem) either by contacting Josiane Polidori, Writing and Publishing Section officer, at 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5576, fax (613) 566-4410, e-mail: josiane.polidori@canadacouncil.ca or Gordon Platt, the head of Canada Council's Writing and Publishing Section, at 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5570, or e-mail at gordon.platt@canadacouncil.ca



Jensen among Hugo finalists

Jan Lars Jensen's The Secret History of the Ornithopter is among the finalists for a Hugo Award in the Best Novelette category.

The novelette appeared in the June '99 issue of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

The Hugo Awards will be handed out at the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago, Aug. 31 to Sept. 4.

Doctorow finalist for Campbell

Cory Doctorow has been nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for best new science fiction writer.

Doctorow

The Campbell Award is given to the best new science fiction or fantasy writer whose first work of science fiction or fantasy appearing in a professional publication (defined as a publication with an average print run of at least 10,000) was published in the previous two years.

The award will be given at the Hugo Awards ceremony at the World Science Fiction Convention.

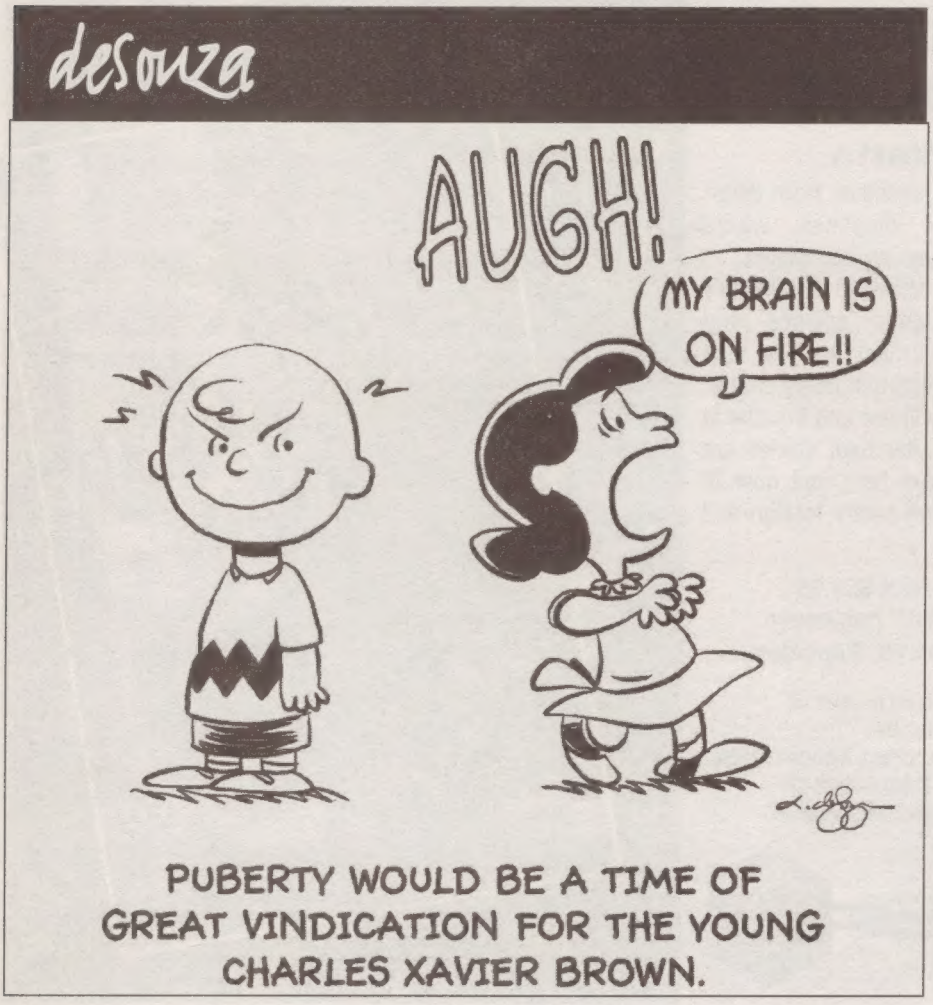
The other four nominees are Thomas Harlan, Ellen Klages, Kristine Smith and Shane Tourtellotte.

DarkTales, Bookface bring horror to Digital World

DarkTales Publications (**www.darktales.com**) and Bookface (**www.bookface.com**) have announced a partnership agreement that will allow DarkTales to deliver its books to readers directly over the Internet.

"We immediately saw the potential in Bookface.com and wanted to be a part of what they were doing from its

Continued on page 66



GOT NEWS?
send it to editorial@parsec.on.ca

Letter writer shouldn't shoot award committee

Dear Editor:

In response to the letter from T.M. Driverman concerning the Aurora Awards (Aurora Awards Walking Corpse — Spring 2000).

First of all, if he feels so strongly about the Aurora Awards why did he not sign his real name? Because he did not do so his arguments and viewpoints lose their credibility. I would suggest to him that if he wants his letter to be taken seriously that he identify himself in the next issue.

Secondly, I know that he is involved in the bringing about of another award called the Sunburst Awards. These awards will not be done the same way the Aurora Awards are done, but by a panel of judges and will not be, as T.M. Driverman has stated openly, a "popularity award"

T.M. Driverman criticizes the Aurora Awards by pointing out all of its problems but in the letter I see he does not offer any solutions to the problems. If the Aurora Awards have problems then they must be addressed at the next general meeting and he should be the one to bring the topics up for discussion by requesting they be put on the agenda. I also believe that if he is not happy with the way that the current Aurora Award committee is being conducted then they should be asked if they wish to continue and/or given suggestions as to how to improve on their performance.

He says the Auroras are purposeless, I disagree. The purpose of the Auroras is to honour and recognize Canadian authors, artists and fans for their work(s). T.M. Driverman should remember the ear-to-ear smile he had on his face the year he won his Aurora.

Thirdly, the Canvention: At the time the rotation system came about, (sometime in the late '70s or early '80s) science-fiction conventions were healthy in attendance and financially so it was not difficult for the Canvention to move around; then in the early '90s when the recession hit (and it hit hard) science-fiction conventions in Canada suffered a great deal, so much so that some ceased operation and the number of available conventions to host the Canvention went down drastically. Also, at around the same time was the advent of the Internet, which has also been a factor in the reduction of attendance at conventions.

As far as I know, the Western conventions that currently may be able to host a Canvention are KeyCon in Winnipeg, ConVersion in Calgary and V-Con in the Vancouver area.

It is just a question of their willingness to do so.

Yes Toronto Trek is a media convention, but so is Primedia and I believe that Primedia did a marvellous job.

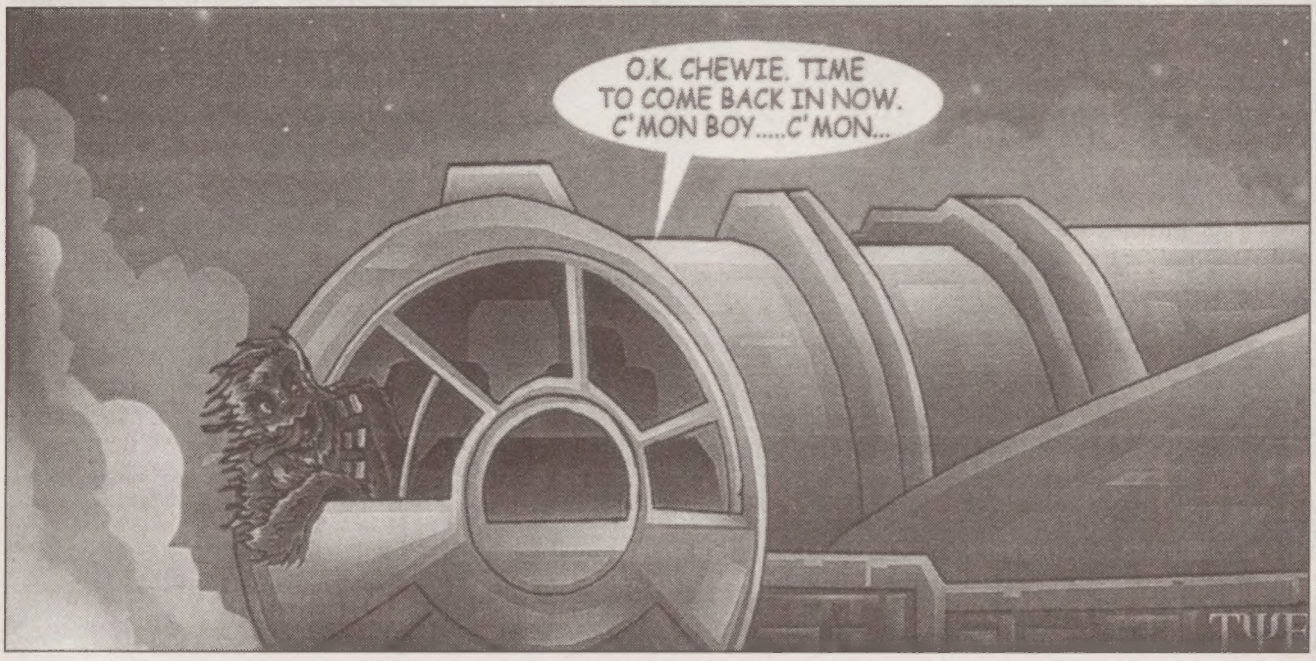
One must remember that a lot of the Toronto Trek committee members are science fiction readers and are very aware of the Aurora Awards, so much so that they nominate and have been nominated and vote for the Auroras.

I don't know of any awards, be it the Aurora Awards up to the Oscars, that don't have a problem of some sort. If the Auroras are ill then let's not take it outback to shoot it, let's nurse it back to health.

Yvonne Penney
Toronto

Email your letters to:
editorial@parsec.on.ca

Lighter side of sci-fi



by TYI

No limits

Athlete's determination puts Victoria Pratt in the spotlight

By
Chris Krejlgaard

Gina Torres, Jennifer Sky and Victoria Pratt kick mutant butt in the future.

Photos by Geoffrey Short; courtesy of Studios USA television.

Being a competitive athlete requires focus, determination and a willingness to make some sacrifices.

These are traits which Victoria Pratt developed while growing up in a Chesley, Ont., and excelling as a track athlete.

"My parents encouraged me in whatever I wanted to do and in high school, my big interest was track and field."

To accommodate this interest meant 45-minute drives from her small town to track practices for the regional team, as well as lonely training sessions as she practiced on her own.

Specializing in the 400m and the 800m, she gained a medal at the Canadian Track and Field Championships in 1990.

The discipline she developed to accomplish these goals stood her well when she entered university.

There she not only ran track, but also remained on the dean's list every year before she graduated summa cum laude.

This same sense of discipline and drive to achieve have served Pratt well in her acting career. It's a career which has, of late, landed her in New Zealand as she tackles the role of Sarge on Cleopatra 2525.

"I paid my dues in so many ways," Pratt says of her success as an actor.

"I've been incredibly disciplined with my school and with my athletics.

"We all work for our good fortune and I don't think it's been blind luck. Good luck happens when opportunity meets preparedness and I was very prepared for every opportunity that I jumped on."

"One door opens and you keep going and going and you just sort of end up in a place you never thought you'd be."

But she admits acting wasn't one of the career options she contemplated growing up north of Toronto.

"The fact that I got into acting at all just blows me away, because it never seemed like an option," she said. "Television was something you watched, it wasn't something that you participated in.

"It's all very surreal to me."

It was an incidental comment in a Toronto office that led Pratt into a career in acting, albeit in a convoluted way.

Pratt had every intention of building upon the knowledge that she gained through her athletic career. She had entered the kineseology program at York University in Toronto with the intention of

pursuing a career in medicine.

After getting her degree, Pratt began work in the schools human performance lab when she realized, "this isn't what I want to do everyday.

"I wondered, what can I do everyday and come home smiling.

"The reality is that you're going to spend the majority of time in your life working and you might as well enjoy it."

She was offered a graduate scholarship to study physiology at the University of Toronto and turned it down.

Pratt was working on a book on fitness and bodybuilding with one of her former professors.

The two met with the editor of Musclemag and Oxygen to purchase photos for the book. While in his office, the editor commented on the athlete's appearance

"The editor saw me and thought I had 'a look'," she recalls. "And my fitness career started from there.

"He was really the one who convinced me to take acting classes so I went from fitness to acting."

So she joined the Actors Network in Toronto.

Pratt considers herself lucky since she landed the first part she auditioned for — a part as an on-the-air trainer on Go For It — and never looked back.

She's appeared in such series as Once a Thief, Xena and Legacy — before becoming Sarge. During the coming weeks, she's appeared on First Wave and in the HBO movie, Blacktop.

"You can take all the classes in the world, but you really don't learn until you get out there and work," she said.

"Because I've been luck to work a lot since I've started, I think that I'm improving all the time."

Like an athletic event, each acting assignment carries different challenges and requires different abilities to be brought forward and strengthened.

On Cleopatra 2525, Pratt has been able to hone her action skills on the set.

"A lot is involved in action that you never notice as a viewer," Pratt explains. "Things like thinking about the action. The audience has to see that you are making a plan in your head and not just mindlessly doing action.

"It has to make sense to you otherwise it won't make sense in the movie.

"That is the sort of thing I'm working on now."

Making the effort easier is Pratt's adherence to a strict fitness regiment since her days on the Bruce Peninsula. Her athleticism allows her to perform many of her own stunts and enhance the realism of the action sequences on the show — of course, this doesn't mean that there aren't bruises and cuts aren't a hazard.

Pratt was reminded of this when she

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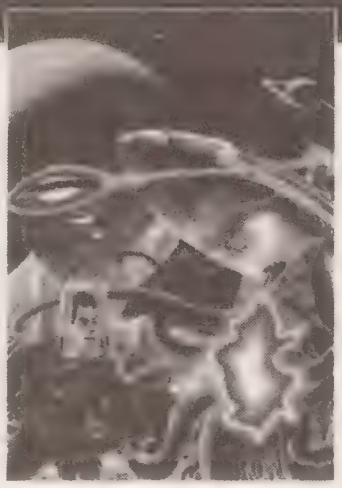

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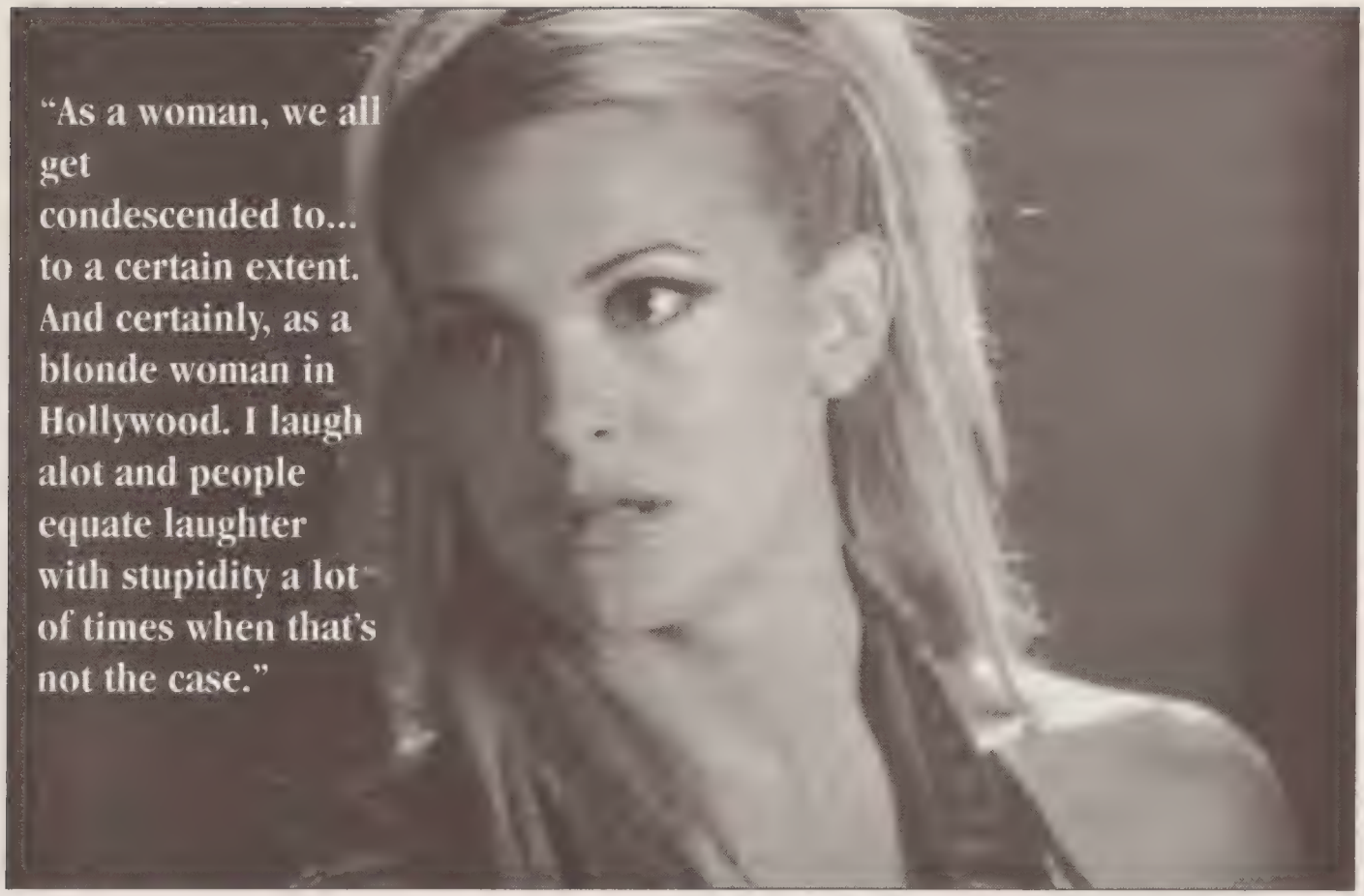
"As a woman, we all get condescended to... to a certain extent. And certainly, as a blonde woman in Hollywood. I laugh alot and people equate laughter with stupidity a lot of times when that's not the case."

Photo by Geoffrey Short; courtesy of Studios USA television.

shot an episode recently.

During a recent shoot, Pratt was supposed to tackle Cleo (Jennifer Sky). Strapped into a harness, Pratt discovered that she was just slightly out of practice. The dive ended with Pratt crashlanding, feet up and uttering "a blue streak of foul language."

"It's a lot more real as opposed to you saying your dialogue and the stuntperson takes over from there," Pratt said. "It makes it a lot more real when you can fight the bad guys and do your own stunts and flips."

Pratt laughs as she likens the rush that comes with performing such stunts with other testosterone-charged endeavours.

"I guess it's the closest that we get to an all out brawl. I can see why teenaged boys do it."

Part of the exercise requires an element of trust between the actor and the director — both that the director knows what he or she is doing and that during the editing process all the right elements of the scene are collected for the final project.

"But if the story makes sense and you give yourself over to the story," Pratt explains. "Then the action does seem pretty seamless."

Of course, action sequences are nothing new to Pratt or her co-stars Sky and Gina Torres. All of them are veterans of the other New Zealand-based production, Xena.

Lucky

Appearing as Cyane on the program, Pratt attracted the attention of the show's producer who wanted a similar character in the other project he was developing to replace Hercules.

"He told me that he wrote the part of Sarge with me in mind," Pratt recalls.

But there was a problem.

When it came time to cast the role, Pratt wasn't available. She was under contract to Aaron Spelling for Forbidden Island. Still Pratt was signed on in second position for Sarge.

This meant that, had the Spelling project gone to series, then Sarge would have had to be written out of Cleopatra 2525.

But the character wasn't and Pratt believes she has landed the role with countless possibilities for an actor.

"I'm kind of lucky with Sarge," said Pratt. "She's the wildcard. You never know what she's going to do. Her internal monitor can misfire every now and then and she does totally inappropriate things.

"My character can do anything and that's what I like. I don't want her to become predictable."

Even though Pratt says she is more patient and cautious than her character, there are certain touchstones the two share.

"Every now and then, we have a good roar because we realize how close these characters are to how we really are," she said. "Of course, no one could act like Sarge in the real world and get away with it.

"But, in a world where you could do whatever you wanted, that's who I would be for sure."

"They write these roles and these characters but you have to bring them to life and obviously you bring them to life with things that you have to pull from within yourself.

"I don't know what the hell I pulled up, but there it is."

On a substantial level,

"I don't have any limits on the things that I want to do."

Pratt and Sarge share admirable traits.

"Neither one of us is weak and neither one of us is a victim," Pratt said with a measure of pride. "There's a strength there.

"She's like a mother lioness, she's very protective. And I see those qualities in myself."

Like Sarge, Pratt is protective of her family and of herself and expects a measure of respect both for herself and for those around her.

Pratt has a measure of distaste for condescension — whether it's inflicted on her or her friends.

"I don't like to see other people being treated poorly," Pratt said.

"I grew up with loving parents who treated me with the utmost respect and it just floors me when I see behaviour to the contrary.

"I'll never be in a relationship like that — a hurtful one, a bad one. That's just not how I operate."

Perhaps, but too often it's the way the world operates — especially the world of show business.

"As a woman, we all get condescended to... to a certain extent. And certainly, as a blonde woman in Hollywood," Pratt explains. "I laugh alot and people equate laughter with stupidity a lot of times when that's not the case.

"People who don't know you will try to condescend to you. But that doesn't work, because I don't take that."

Such an attitude has stood her well in an industry where competition for roles means the chances for success are slight.

"I have never had to bang my head against the wall looking for work and I won't make any apologies for being a working actor," Pratt said.

Looking back, there are no regrets over the path she has chosen.

Photo by Geoffrey Short; courtesy of Studios USA television.

"One door opens and you keep going and going and you just sort of end up in a place you never thought you'd be."

It's a place where she is very happy.

"I'm having a ball and who knows what's coming next."

And there are plenty of options for the actor.

During her hiatus from Cleopatra 2525, Pratt wants to spread her thespian wings and try some "unsarge-like" characters — especially in comedy.

As well, she plans to work on some writing projects.

"I just want to do neat things."

Down the road, Pratt would like to get behind the camera, either as a director or as a producer.

"I don't have any limits on the things that I want to do," she said.

☆

The BLACK CHALICE

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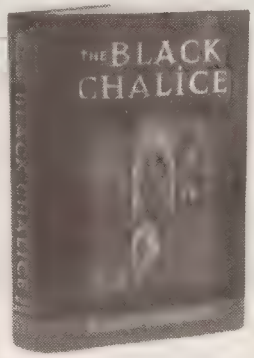

The Black Chalice
by Marie Jakober

It's 1134. In a bleak monastery somewhere in Germany, Paul of Ardiun begins the chronicle he has been ordered by his religious superiors to write: the story of the knight Karelian Brandeis, for whom Paul once served as squire, who fell prey to the evil wiles of a seductive sorceress, thereby precipitating civil war and the downfall of a king. But before Paul can set down more than a sentence or two of this cautionary tale, the sorceress herself magically appears to him. He is a liar, she tells him, and always has been. She lays a spell on him: from this moment, he will only be able to write the truth.

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Hidden agendas

Photo courtesy of Salter Street Films

This season Bennett joins the cast of Lexx as the ruler of a binary planet who would like nothing better than to leave his kingdom — if he could just figure out how.

Since coming to Canada in the mid-'80s, Nigel Bennett has made a career playing characters who range from the interesting to the just plain weird. But the ones he's most remembered for all have a common thread — there's a method to their madness

Nigel Bennett has forged a formidable career tackling roles which, to put it mildly, could be considered eccentric.

"Most of the time, the project picks me rather than me picking the project," he said. "But I like to find things that are different, odd and quirky and interesting.

"Lexx was definitely that, as was Forever Knight, Psi Factor and Top of the Food Chain"

From 1992-95, Bennett played vampire Lucien LaCroix, the nemesis of vampire/police officer Nick Knight on Forever Knight. It was a role which garnered him a Gemini (Canada's version of the Emmy Award) in 1996.

More recently, he has tackled the role of Prince on the 13-episode third season of Lexx.

The third season takes place 4,000 years after the second season ended. The Xev, Stanley and Kai have been in cryo-sleep and are awakened when the Lexx is caught in the gravity of a binary planet system.

The two planets, Fire and Water, are naturally at war and the crew of the Lexx find themselves caught in the middle.

Bennett was offered the role of Prince without an audition — thanks to the stature he gained from Forever Knight and Bennett's earlier work with Lexx producer Paul Donovan.

"They simply decided that I was the right person for that part."

Prince, is the ruler of Fire and becomes the target of Xev's affections.

"He's a bit like a child who's discovered a new toy, this huge wonderful toy, which is the Lexx and the people

on it," Bennett explains.

"As the season goes on, you discover that he has almost limitless power. He can be anyone he wants and do anything he wants, except leave the two planets.

"His main idea is to destroy the two planets so he can leave."

For Bennett fans, should Lexx head for a fourth season there is a chance for him to return as Prince.

In retrospect, Bennett points out that the characters of the Prince and LaCroix share may of the same traits.

"LaCroix had his own agenda and he had almost limitless power. They were both very childlike in their approach to things, 'I'll do things because I can do them'," he said.

Indeed, personal agendas are a common thread through many of his roles.

Between the LaCroix and the Prince, Bennett has appeared as Maj. Ray McIntyre on Earth: Final Conflict, as Frank Elsinger on Psi Factor, as Jake Esterhaus on Total Recall 2070 and as Col. Egran Petrosian on La Femme Nikita.

In the movie Top of the Food Chain, which had a limited Canadian release earlier this year, Bennett played a door-to-door salesman who, it turns out, was a visiting alien.

"They all have their own agenda which people aren't aware of at the time," Bennett said of his roles.

But don't think that Bennett has stuck to science fiction. Au contraire.

Photo courtesy of Space: the Imagination Station

Playing an alien who is disguised as a door-to-door salesman named Michel O'Shea. It's a character who, like many of his other roles has a personnal agenda that puts others at risk.

Haunted

Since coming to Canada from England in 1986, Bennett has forged a diverse resume which would be the envy of most actors. Part of this is because there are few roles that Bennett has turned down.

"Being a Canadian actor is not as easy as being an American actor, particularly being a Canadian actor based in Canada," he said.

"What tends to happen is that people come with projects to make in Canada, but the main roles are already cast in the States. What's left is cast among those people up here.

"It's rare that I turn anything down. Because, as a Canadian actor, you're not in a position to turn things down."

Despite his vast film, television and stage resume, Bennett remains haunted by *that commercial* —

The five-year advertising campaign made such an indelible impression on Canadian viewers that people still approach Bennett on the street and utter the phrase, "It's not oatmeal."

Once a woman shouted across a Toronto street at Bennett.

"I thought 'My god, I've done all these things on television and all these plays and no one knows who the hell I am. I do one commerical and bang, everyone knows me'.

"I thought it was a nice comment on what people actually watched on television."

Earlier this year, he could be seen as Gen. Horatio Gates in the A&E movie, The Crossing.

While some actors might research the historical aspects of the role, Bennett chose to rely on his instincts.

"There's no need to research the role," he said. "Basically, that situation could arise anywhere today. It wasn't a situation that was particular to that time period. It was two guys in the boardroom arguing about who was going to be in charge."

Bennett's strength as an actor is his instincts when it comes to playing a role.

"I read a script and almost straight away, I know what I want to do with it. And then it's just a matter of making sure it's what the director wants and most of the time it is.

"But it's all very instinctive. I don't sit there and tear the part apart."

These instincts also led Bennett to follow more challenging paths in por-

Continued on page 69

Selected Credits

MOVIES:
Gotti
Murder at 1600
The Skulls
Star Command

TELEVISION:
Earth: Final Conflict
La Femme Nikita
FX: The Series
Robocop: The Series
Silver Surfer

X-men feature

Making Cyclops work and blowing out roofs part of the job for Toronto special-effects shop

Martin Hunger has worked on movies before in his work designing and constructing props, but it's likely none are any larger or more hyped that the X-Men.

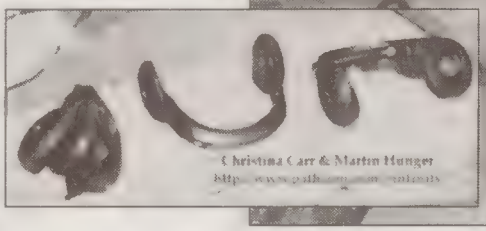
"It was really neat," he said. "For myself, it was the first really big movie that I've worked on," Hunger said. "I've been an X-Men fan for years and it was quite exciting to do."

Hunger, who is an electronics and mechanics specialist, works with JJAMB Productions.

During recent years, Hunger has worked on such films as David Cronenberg's Existence, as well as on such television programs as Earth: Final Conflict, La Femme Nikita and Total Recall 2070.

For the X-Men, Hunger was a member of the special effects team at Toronto-based JJAMB which helped make Cyclops' visor functional — OK, functional from a special-effects perspective.

The company took versions of the visor which were created by the California company, Oakley. (Oakley had taken casts of actor, James Marsden's head, and fitted them with the red polymer to mimic ruby quartz) JJAMB then adapted the Oakley versions to the director's vision.



"The director (Bryan Singer) decided the original one was too big and clunky," Hunger recalled.

Fine tuning the visor to the final version took about three weeks of back-and-forth trips between the set and the special-effects shop before Singer was happy with the final product.

"The versions they sent to use were really quite beautiful," Hunger said of the original version visors.

Besides helping in the design of the visor, JJAMB designed and pulled off one of the many spectacular effects in the movie.

In the film, there is a battle scene where Toad pulls off Cyclops's visor and allows the power beam to take the roof off the building.

"You have to remember that Cyclops's power beam is really a force

Parsec photo

Prop designer and builder Martin Hunger with one of the rejects from ExisTence.

beam," Hunger explained. "This means that the roof has to be pushed out from below rather than just explode."

After the design team spent a couple of days surveying the Hamilton, Ont., train station where the scene was shot, JJAMB built a small-scale model of the building. Small-scale is a bit misleading — it was 1/4 scale.

The team also had to figure out how to decide which portions of the roof would be broken away in the shot and how to mold the roof so that the portions would break away properly.

"Instead of rigging the roof of the model with explosives, the special-effects wizards used cables and 30-foot bungee cords strung over a huge bar above the miniature. Using a pull-pin arrangement, the cords were released.

Using bungee cords, the team ran through the effect in their studio.

"It was a big mess," Hunger said of the run-through. "Once it was blown up and pulled apart, cleaning it up and reconstructing the roof took quite a bit of time."

From there, the model was taken to the studio where shooting took about a week and a half because of the two-to three-day turn around time between takes.

"We had to pour a new ceiling and make sure that the new ceiling was correct."

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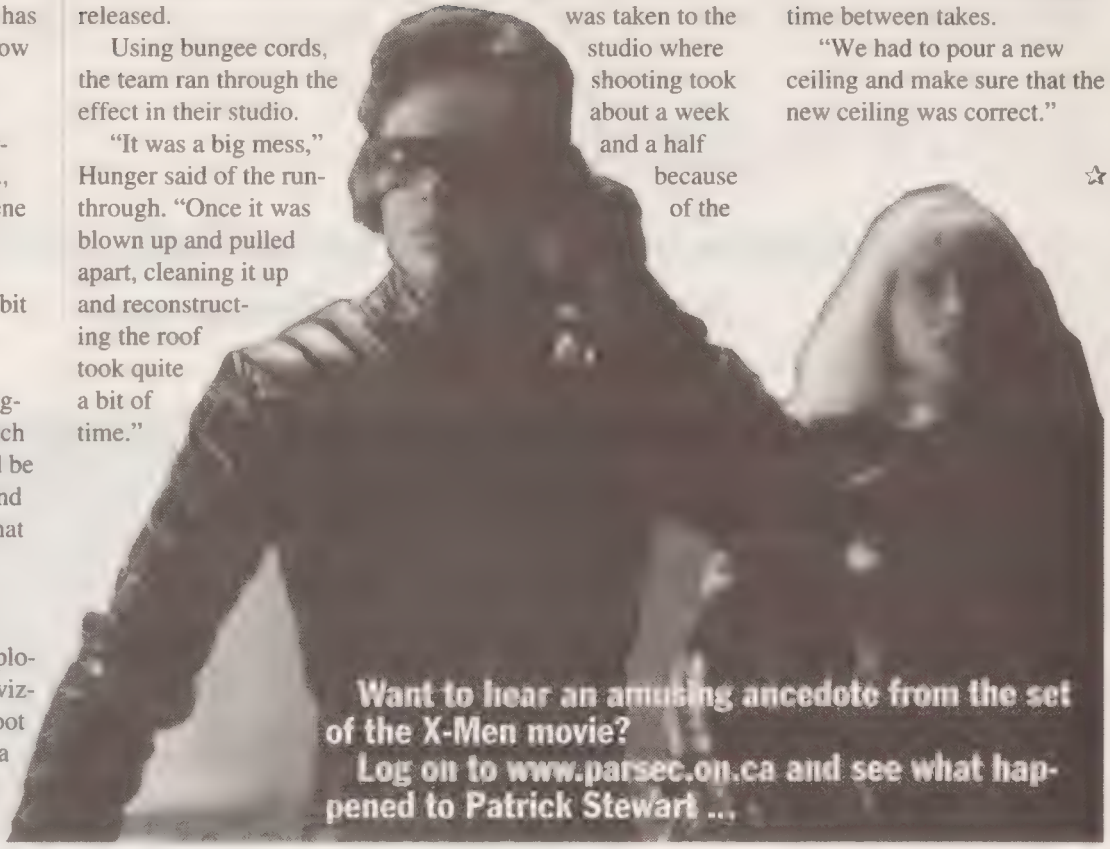

Want to hear an amusing ancedote from the set of the X-Men movie?
Log on to www.parsec.on.ca and see what happened to Patrick Stewart ...

OVERLOAD

Think of Steambath meets The Shining meets Lifeboat in the Twilight Zone, says creator Bill Mumy

Overload is the fruition of a dream for actor Bill Mumy.

Mumy began to develop the project three years ago as a way to work with fellow former child actor Billy Gray.

"I've always been a huge fan of Billy's work. Bud Anderson,the character he played on Father Knows Best, in my opinion is the coolest teen on a TV series ever," Mumy said.

"The Day The Earth Stood Still, is my favorite sci fi film, and Billy was fantastic in that. I think he was just amazing onscreen.

"But I had never met him."

While he was working on Babylon 5, Mumy mentioned to the producers that it would be fantastic to have Gray on the series. Director Tony Dow (Leave it to Beaver) overheard the conversation and mentioned Gray was a neighbour of his.

A gathering was arranged and over ping-pong and Mexican food, a friendship was forged.

"Billy and I talked about our showbiz experiences, and I told him how much I enjoyed his acting work. He hadn't worked on camera in a long, long time, more than 20 years," Mumy recalls. "I asked him if he missed it and if he wanted to work as an actor again. He said he would very much like that.

"So, I decided to write something as a vehicle to return with."

Taking an idea that "just popped into" his head, Mumy developed the basic premise in a short period of time. He then began deciding who he wanted to appear in the project with Gray and himself.

"I knew that I wanted to act in it with Billy and I knew I wanted Tony to direct it and to act in it also, so the idea of making it a project that included former child actors that I believe are really talented was born then," Mumy said.

The movie features, Mumy, Angela Cartwright (Make Room for Daddy and Lost in Space), Gray, Dow (Leave it to Beaver), Don Grady (Rob on My Three Sons), Johnny Crawford (The Rifleman) and Melissa Gilbert (Little House on the Prairie). Besides acting in the movie, Grady is composing the musical score for the movie.

Also taking on roles in the project is George Takei and Claudia Christian — who replaces original cast member Veronica Cartwright (Alien) who fell victim to a scheduling conflict.

All of these actors have either worked with Mumy in the past or are close friends.

Takei had worked with Mumy on the Montreal-based series Space Cases, while Christian appeared with Mumy during the first four seasons of Babylon 5.

"Both of them bring sci-fi veteran acting chops to the project, as well as being fine actors and good people," Mumy says of Takei and Christian. "And, everyone likes working with their friends, right?"

On Space Cases, Takei appeared for three episodes as the alien Warlord Shank — although you'd be hard-pressed to recognize him under heavy reptilian make-up.

"It's nice to be able to offer him another gig, this time without the alien make-up," Mumy says.

Like Gray, there were other people Mumy wanted to work with on the project. One was Angela Cartwright.

The original cast of Overload (clockwise from top) Mumy, Billy Gray, Tony Dow, Don Grady, Veronica Cartwright, Angela Cartwright and Johnny Crawford. Veronica has since dropped out and has been replaced by Claudia Christian

Of course, it was on the Lost in Space series where they began a long friendship.

And the possibility of working on yet another project with Mumy, as well as with so many of her contemporary child stars was a selling point. But there were others. The character of Guard and "Bill asked me." were right near the top of the list said Cartwright

"Bill said he had written Vivian Guard with me in mind. It seemed like the perfect vehicle for me to act in," Cartwright says.

Guard is one of the only characters of the crew who is not in the military.

Cartwright describes her character as "compassionate, in-tune and confused."

In order to prepare for the role Cartwright enlisted the aid of a psychic.

"I went to observe her and to ask her how she receives her information," Cartwright explained.

"I ended up getting personal information that blew me away."

But she wasn't the only actor to have a character based upon them.

As Overload progressed through its development stage, Mumy began to base aspects of the characters upon the actors who would play them.

"Initially, I created the characters with the actors in mind," Mumy explained. "But after we had an initial table reading of the script with the cast and I really heard the words and saw the actors, it did develop in much more specific ways from there on out."

Mumy noted that the actors' speech patterns and speech levels factored into the later revisions of the script.

As the project developed, what was originally supposed to be a 40-minute movie suddenly took on larger proportions.

After composing the basic framework, Mumy called in longtime collaborator Peter David who wrote the first draft of the script.

Now, the movie has grown to feature-length and plans are under way for theatrical, television, VHS, DVD and Internet releases of the final product.

In a time when special effects overpower details like plot and characterization,

Overload cannot be considered the usual science fiction fare.

Overload is the story of the last seven survivors of an exploratory space vessel damaged beyond repair. Each member is forced to confront their emotions, resentments, hopes, dreams and, of course, each other.

"It's the story of a deep space exploratory vessel sent to probe a sector of space, The Curtain of Heaven, that is rumoured to be where God rested after creating reality as we know it," Mumy said.

But something goes wrong, and the once-close group of crewmates, find they're now hopeless, injured, frightened people. Their time is running out. Old secrets bubble to the surface. Imminent death brings new clarity. Perceptions change and personalities clash explosively in unexpected ways.

"I think of Overload as a cross between Steambath, meets Lifeboat meets The Shining in The Twilight Zone," Mumy explains.

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Mumy, Cartwright begin shopping novel

Long-time friends forge dark fantasy novel

Over the 30-some years since Lost in Space first went off the air, Bill Mumy and Angela Cartwright have remained close friends and have collaborated on a number of projects.

Now, the two have completed the first draft of a dark fantasy.

The novel, carrying the working title of To What Purpose, is currently under going some fine tuning as the two look for a publisher.

The project grew from a single conversation

"Bill and I were talking one day and we decided to write a book. It was that simple ... and soon that complicated," Cartwright says of the genesis of the novel.

Originally, the two set out to compose a children's fable, but it ended up as something more.

"It certainly appeals to adults with an imagination," Cartwright said.

Neither author is willing to give away much about the novel's plot, but Cartwright describes it as "a story about good and evil, dark and light, heroes, heroines, and synchronicity. It melds contemporary with old world.

"It's a story about one's purpose."

With their respective careers and busy schedules, working together on a daily basis was difficult. So, they created a system which may be a little unorthodox for other writers. But it worked.

"We found we were very in sync on this story we wanted to tell. We discussed the direction of the book. We e-mailed each other, we sparked each others creative imagination," said Cartwright. "Our style of writing melded together into this story that we both got very involved in."

After outlining the novel, they each wrote separate chapters at their homes. "Then we'd exchange what we'd done and each would polish and add to what the other had written. We got through the bulk of the first draft that way," Mumy explained.

After the draft was completed, they spent six months sequestered in Cartwright's office " writing together to make it cohesive and get it right."

Photo courtesy of Bill Mumy

Friends since their Lost in Space days, Angela Cartwright and Bill Mumy have collaborated on a number of projects over the years.

Sometimes they even acted out scenes they were working on to ensure it flowed correctly. We'd get up and act out the scenes sometimes. It was challenging, and inspiring, and fun. Frustrating too from time to time.

"After we passed page 200 things really changed," Mumy said. "We both feel good about this project."

Making the process easier was their long-standing friendship and the great rapport they had developed through their various collaborations.

"We grew up together, we know each other really well, and it was time for Ange to get some new creative projects going," Mumy said. "We both have a love of fantasy and faerie folklore."

Looking back, both Mumy and Cartwright found the experience rewarding.

"It's been wonderful writing the novel with Ange," Mumy said. "It's very liberating. Realizing that you don't have to make it clock in at 22 minutes like an episodic half hour TV show, or 25 pages like a comic book script.

"And yes, it's quite challenging.

Cartwright added "It's like with anything creative that you do. You just know when it's happening. It's instinct, the story just takes on a life ... you get to really know the people you are writing about, you give them a soul."

☆

NEXT TIME OUT

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Web holds place for small-press operations

The new wired world has brought on a revolution for science fiction fans

By

Dale Sproule

One of the glories of being involved in science fiction has always been the ability to tell friends in the mainstream that concepts like nano-technology and distributed computer networks are old hat. At one time or another, most of us have had the pleasure of turning to a friend or co-worker and saying something like, "oh, Arthur C. Clarke wrote about that in the '40s."

But these days it's difficult for science fiction writers to stay ahead of science itself. Near-future science fiction runs the risk of becoming obsolete before the story gets published.

There is an upside to this technological revolution.

At this point of the 21st century, it's easier to be on the cutting edge of science and technology than ever before in history. Virtually anyone working in any aspect of computer technology is genuinely able to explore new ground — to create something unlike anything most people have seen before. And the same holds true for new media. Writers, artists and editors have been handed a brand new tool with limitless creative potential and it's up to us to make the most of it.

This column is dedicated to an unearthing and investigating the best genre-related websites I can find.

The transition itself can be difficult, and many old-school editors approach new media warily. I recently crossed online paths with Larry Dennis, an editor who published some of my early stories in a magazine called **EOTU**.

In its hardcopy incarnation, his little zine, full of experimental writing was a groundbreaker. Many writers from its pages — including Howard Hendrix and Cliff Burns — went on to find success. Larry expressed some trepidation to me about entering the online forum, but acknowledged that small-print-run magazines were no longer financially feasible.

Another wonderful, though largely unexplored facet of the Internet is the instant interchange that allowed our conversation to take place.

Virtually anyone working in any aspect of computer technology is genuinely able to explore new ground

We agreed in the end that while it's wonderful to have an artifact such as a magazine that you can hold in your hand, the web offers all sorts of unexplored possibilities. Hopefully EOTU and many other magazines will find new life within its virtual pages.

Chiaroscuro is a small, though this time, brand-new webzine subtitled Treatments of Light and Shade in Words. You may hate their name because it's hard to spell when you're typing in the URL, but Chiaroscuro is a sleek and handsome little electronic entity.

Opinionated editor Brett Savory's recent editorial apparently ruffled feathers (batwings?) in the Horror Writers Association. Poetry editor Sandra Kasturi is one of the best poets and best readers I have ever encountered. Her trapped-between-the-old-world-and-the-new sensibilities should dig up some pretty hilarious, vivid and baroque work.

The mag already showed some pretty impressive chops by publishing multi-award winning story "Five Days in April," by Brian A. Hopkins.

Gothic Net is the domain where Chiaroscuro exists. But besides hosting a sprawling and fascinating domain, Gothic Net is a wonderful entertainment unto itself. It has one of the coolest web pages I've encountered — an old circus poster with departments in the guise of freaks. To get to the art gallery you click on The Hall of Mirrors and to look at the site directory (Gothic Net hosts more than 200 web sites) you click on Inky Joe the Amazing Tattooed Man. Which works fine as long as your browser can handle java rollovers.

As well as world-class writing, the site features some fine online artwork. If you've ever seen the hardcopy magazine **Carpe Nocturne**, you have a pretty good idea where their artistic tastes lie — dark-romance with a bloody little twist. As cool as these dark sites are, the science fiction sites are where you'd expect to find the real groundbreaking developments.

Sci-Fi.com is a sure thing and one of the few to live up to its promise.

This official website of the US science fiction channel is a multi-headed giant and all the heads are potent. The main scifi.com page has recently received a cool animated facelift and they've now got Science Fiction Weekly — a terrific and amazingly punctual sf media newsmagazine — under their wing, as well as SF Wire and now they even have Ellen Datlow.

The former fiction editor from Omni edits Scifiction. The first few 'issues' include new work by Pat Cadigan, James Blaylock and Kristine Katherine

Continued on page 69

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Writer always looks for happy endings

After handling the webcrawler, writer J.M. DeMatteis plans to get into the head of the Man of Steel

By
A. Jaye Williams

Listening to a writer-legend J.M. DeMatteis, who's been in the business of writing for more than 20 years, discuss comic books and television can't help but stir the juices within any comic book fan.

It is clear that he not only relishes his craft, but he passionately pursues it. He's been the writer of such notable comic books as The Amazing Spider-Man, The Defenders and Captain America plus countless others that even he can recall for Marvel Comics; Justice League, Dr. Fate, Batman are among the countless titles for DC Comics that have also eluded his memory.

"There have been just so many, I just can't recall them all," he says laughing at the absurdity of it. Such statements brings about admiration — and a pang of jealousy — to all aspiring writers out there today.

DeMatteis, who currently lives in "beautiful Hudson Valley New York," is a graduate of Empire State College, "almost the same school as Peter Parker graduated from," DeMatteis chuckles.

His first works, back in the '70s, were small scale in length.

"Mostly anthology stories, about five to eight pages in horror and war comics, like House of Secrets and Weird War Stories.

These eventually led the talented writer to more popular and mainstream comics such as Batman, Red Tornado and Aquaman.

However, his proudest achievements on a personal level are the 400-page autobiographical comic book, Brooklyn Dreams, for Paradox Press (an imprint of DC Comics), Moonshadows, a 12-issue series that has also been reprinted — along with its sequel, Farewell, Moonshadows — as a single trade paperback for Vertigo and Seekers into the Mystery for Vertigo. The latter is currently in development as a feature film.

Regarding mainstream comic books, one of his favourite stories he did was in Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight entitled Going Sane.

The story deals with the overused villain, the Joker, but utilizes him in an original and offbeat manner.

Instead of the Joker failing once again to kill Batman, the story starts off with the crazed criminal apparently succeeding. The supposed death of his arch-nemesis causes the Joker to go sane — so to speak. It's a revelatory approach to a classic super villain that is rarely done these days.

When asked about what it is about the medium that keeps him coming back to it, DeMatteis is very emphatic about the range it offers.

"The medium is powerful... stories can be told hundreds of different ways. It allows for a pure vision to come through."

Artistic venue

He clearly loves the almost limitless expression and artistic avenue that the medium offers a writer. The ability to tell stories, relate unique characters and present them in a vast number of assorted ways is something that continues to challenge and entertain him. For him, the most important aspect in writing a good story, whether it's for comic books or not, is the characters.

He is strongly reliant on character-driven prose.

"The characters are most important, with the themes and events deriving from them... struggle and conflict are important too, but in the end, I think it's imperative that the characters make it out into the light at the end of the tunnel."

Happy endings are part of what DeMatteis believes in personally and professional-

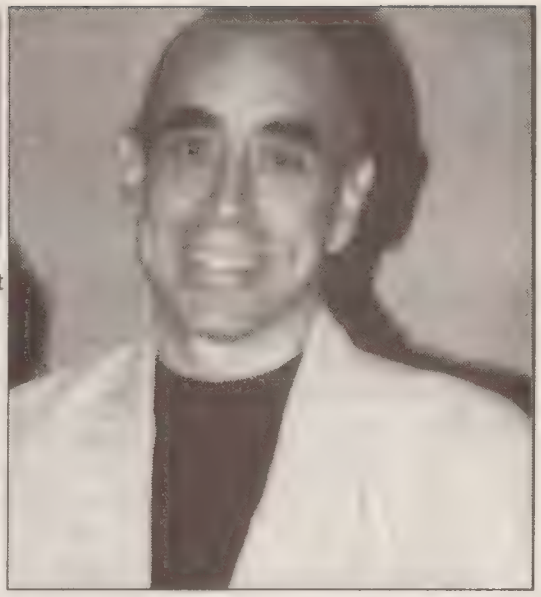
ly.

His work on Justice League with artist Keith Giffen and Kevin Maguire back in 1987 brought him critical acclaim.

His treatment of the characters as uniquely individual with pronounced personalities all their own — i.e. the stone-cold attitude of Batman, the childish Captain Marvel, the arrogant and bullying Guy Gardner — made for amusing and engaging interactions between team members. All this mixed with Earth-threatening disasters and super-villain threats to defend against, delivered some of the most-appreciated and loved comic book writing of its time.

As well, he simply adds about writing comic books, "It's fun... fun!"

"The characters are most important, with the themes and events deriving from them."
— J.M. DeMatteis



His current work is writing The Adventures of Superman for DC Comics.

Though he admits he doesn't expect to bring anything unique or earthshattering to the Superman mythos — "It's pretty much all been done before," he freely admits — he does add that he will bring "his own enthusiasm" to the book, as well as "get into Superman's head" and explore the character from a more psychological angle.

DeMatteis emphasizes that he really wants to "appeal to the eight-year-old in myself and have fun with the Superman character — a character that is probably the most recognizable character in the world."

He also gives a great amount of credit to the other writers, artists and editors on the other Superman titles — such as Joe Kelley, Jeph Loeb and Mark Schultz — for imbuing a strong sense of quality and energy into the Superman books.

"Their work is very strong and inspiring," DeMatteis says with enthusiasm, acknowledging the work of fellow Superman teammates — especially editor Eddie Berganza, "who is the glue who holds these books together."

Looking down the road, DC Comics has planned much more work for the stalwart writer.

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Recommended Reading

Parsec's roster of comic book experts offers the following suggestions for current and up coming releases:

"New Batgirl series, Dark Victory and New Marvel Knights are great,"
— Kevin, Mirror Universe
Dartmouth, N.S..

•••

"Punisher series is the best series of the year,"
— Jody, Empire Comics
Hamilton, Ont.

•••

"New Marvel Knights series and CrossGen look great and have generated a lot of interest,"
— Gerry, Phoenix Comics
Regina, Sask.

•••

"Deadenders is a good blend of mod scooter ans mysteries,"
— Books and Comics Emporium
Vancouver, B.C.

•••

Also getting raves are:

- ★ **Voodoom**
- ★ **Liberty Meadows**
- ★ **Strangers in Paradise**
- ★ **Batman**
- ★ **Crimson**
- ★ **Rising Stars**
- ★ **Punisher**
- ★ **Lenore**
- ★ **Box Office Poison**
- ★ **Section Zero**
- ★ **Batgirl**
- ★ **Silver Age**
- ★ **Fathom**
- ★ **Section Zero**

got one you'd like to recommend? email us at: parsec@isys.ca

He will be writing a 64-page Superman graphic novel with Liam Sharp, a 96-page Batman hard cover book, a 96-page Green Lantern hard cover book, a 48-page Supergirl special and a five-part Batman:Legend of the Dark Knight storyline. As well, he will be scripting a four-part Wonder Woman story, plotted by artist Phil Jimenez who's amazing work in the JLA vs. Titans and Tempest has captured the attention of countless fans.

All of these projects are expected to be released over the next two years.

With work like this lined up, it's easy to see how he keeps himself so busy.

Unlike the '90s, in which there was an explosion of the number of darker, more savage and sexually exploitive superheroes, DeMatteis is really enthusiastic about bringing back comic books aimed at younger audiences.

"The children's market is very under-represented. And with the slump in sales of comics, with no one new buying them, it's very important to open up more of a market for the younger audiences."

With an aging population — particularly comic book readers — DeMatteis sees the importance, both personally and professionally, of expanding the market to children.

Though he admits it's fun to write and present superhero comics, he would like to see more of a variety to offer them. As a fan of Mary Poppins, the Oz and Narnia books and many other classic children stories, DeMatteis knows the value that these classics and the like can offer the young people of today.

As a father, husband and writer, DeMatteis can't emphasize this fact enough. He also sounds somewhat optimistic regarding the more classic superheroes compared to the more-violent comic books saying, "there is a movement to find a balance between the two and even a pulling back from the sexual, violent comics out there today."

Besides working in the comic-book field, DeMatteis has ventured into the realm of Hollywood.

Some might recall the Superboy television series that aired in syndication during the early '90s.

Five episodes can be credited to DeMatteis.

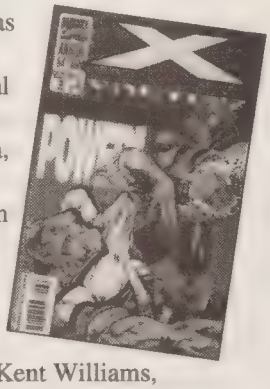
But his most recent work was seen late last year, when he penned several episodes of Earth: Final Conflict. As well, he has a time-travel script, called Straight on Till Morning, being developed by producer/director Chris Columbus and, as mentioned earlier, a feature film adaptation of Brooklyn Dreams in the works.

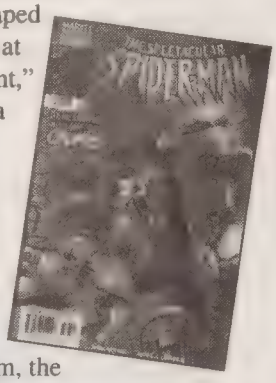
When asked about the differences and similarities in writing for television and for comic books, DeMatteis notes that the "visual approach in writing for film and comic books are very similar."

But it's the differences that seem to stand out more with him. The panorama and dialogue limitations in television are much more restrictive than in comic books.

"At times, while writing a script, I'd like to investigate their inner life of the characters more directly. But you obviously can't use captions and thought balloons in television."

An admirer of Dostoevsky, Dickens and Ray Bradbury, DeMatteis nonetheless wasn't influenced or inspired by any individual in deciding to pursue his craft as a writer. Still he possess a lot of respect for such writing greats as the Stan Lee-Jack Kirby team, Roy Thomas, Steve Gerber, Len Wein and Denny O'Neil, as well as artists Sal and John Buscema, Mike Zeck, Jon J. Muth, Gil Kane, Mark Badger, Kent Williams, Mike Bagley, the Romitas, "any many others, I fear, have escaped my mind at the present," he adds, a hint of regret in his voice that he can't name them all.





For him, the intangible gift that makes one a writer was innate.

He says that he was naturally drawn to writing, sketching and even guitar playing — in fact, he has even put out his own CD of spiritual rock'n' roll entitled, How Many Lifetimes.

The CD is available through Amazon.com.

The spark of the artist seemed to always be an indigenous part of his soul and inner being. An aspect that grew and developed exponentially over the years, and continues to grow to this day.

☆

special thanks to Dan Goldman at DC Comics for his much-appreciated help with this article - ed.

Inker seeks break out of industry's pigeonhole

For more than eight years, Denis Rodier flew with the Man of Steel.

The Quebec-based inker spent most of the '90s working on Action Comics and the Adventures of Superman and helping lead Superman through matrimony and beyond. During those years, Rodier churned out an average four pages a day using technical pens (especially a Pilot Drawing Pen #.02 for straight lines).

Then last year, Rodier's relationship with the legendary character changed.

"DC let many people go on a number of books," Rodier explained. "They decided it had gone on for a long time and that it was time for a change."

Rodier's entrance into the comic book industry was partly due to good timing. He had made it a practice to bring his work to comic conventions and ask professional artists for their critiques. He also sent samples to comic companies.

"I happened to be coming up at a time when the companies were doing bonus books (inserts in regular comics)," Rodier recalls.

After that, he began picking up the odd jobs ("stuff no one wanted to do," he calls it) or help out if a book was falling behind schedule.

After a time, he was tapped to work on the Superman books. Despite working on the world's best known comic book character, Rodier says it isn't the character that keeps him enthused.

"I like the medium, it's gives me the fire," Rodier says. "I would love to work with John Romita Jr. rather than a particular character.

"Besides,there is only two superheroes, Superman and Batman. All the others are just different versions of those two."

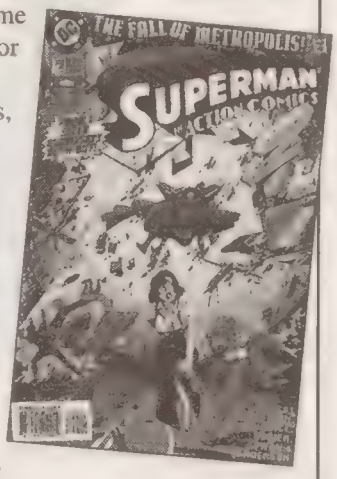
During his time on the Superman titles, he worked with some of the top pencillers as Bob McLeod, Jackson Guice and Tom Grummett.

Of all of the pencillers whose work Rodier finished, Guice is his favourite.

"Jackson and I built up a relationship where me and him separately came up with something quite different from what we started with," Rodier explained. "The closest comparison I can come up with is Simon and Kirby.

"It (the final product) wasn't exactly Simon and it wasn't exactly Kirby."

Guice's loose and dynamic styles provided some enjoyment for the inker. While others, such as Grummett, had styles which were more demanding of the inker.



"His were more cartoony and I always thought that I wasn't good enough for his work," Rodier said with a hint of sorrow. "I always felt that we were a bad fit."

Since leaving Action Comics, Rodier picked up work on such titles as Superman and Captain America. He's also trying to publish his own book — something which would provide him with a measure of security.

"I'd like to do my own book just because the business is so strange these days, that you need to show what you can do to other people.

"I've been pigeonholed into an inking spot," Rodier laments. "People think I can't do anything else. So I need something like my own book to show I can do pencils and lettering too."

☆

Coming Releases

Selected summer/fall releases and their suggested retail price in US dollars.

August

Dark Horse

Madman Comics (TP)	$17.95
Ghost/Batgirl	$2.95
Lone Wolf and Cub (TP)	$9.95
The Nevermen #4 (of 4)	$2.95
Spyboy #11	$2.95

DC

Batman Ego	$6.95
Preacher #1	$2.95
JSA Annual #1	$3.50
Spirit Archives #2	$49.95
Batman: Dark Knight Archives	$49.95

Image

Vanguard: Ethereal Warriors	$5.95
Crimson Pague #2	$2.50
Savage Dragon (TP)	$14.95
Echo #5	$2.95
Objective Five #2	$2.50

Indies

The Atomics #8	$2.95
The Phantom Lady	$26.00
The 7 Guys of Justice #1	$2.00
Pitt: Biogenesis #1	$2.50

Marvel

Doom #1 (of 3)	$2.99
Power Pack #3 (of4)	$2.99
Universe X #1 (of 12)	$3.50

September

Dark Horse

Super Manga Blast! #6	$4.95
Star Wars: Darth Maul	$2.95
Green Lantern vs. Aliens #1 (of 4)	$2.95
Digimon #7	$2.95
Buffy The Vampire Slayer #25	$2.95

DC

Supergirl #50	$3.95
Titans #21	$2.50
Gen13 (TP)	$14.95
Adventure Comics #247	$2.50
No Man's Land (TP)	$12.95

Image

Midnight Nation #1	$2.50
Witchblade #43	$2.50
Butcher Knight #3	$2.50
Hellspawn #2	$2.50

Indies

Turok 3	$4.95
Threshold #32	$4.95
Cave Woman	$10.95
Time Traveler AI #12	$2.95

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man #23	$2.25
Mighty Thor #29	$2.25
Thunderbolts #44	$2.25

Artist follows in legend's footsteps

During the past few years, Richard Pace has expanded his interests and honed his artistic talents beyond the comic book industry

Legendary artist Frank Frazetta provided the inspiration for a young Richard Pace.

"I wanted to be Frank Frazetta," Pace recalls. "A lot of people my age wanted to be Frank Frazetta.

"And I came to realize that there wasn't a lot of guys painting fantasy covers and Frazetta was still working at the time and he did comics until he actually broke in and that's when I started looking at comics seriously."

Frazetta's imagination and the boldness of his work captured Pace's attention and helped provide a focus for the aspiring artist.

As a youngster, art was one thing which set Pace apart from his classmates.

"It was something that I always did better than anyone that I knew when I was growing up," Pace recalls. "I could always draw better, paint better, any of those things that we did in class, I could do better.

"So the ego gratification just pushed me a little more in that direction than it did for the other students."

And Frazetta's work provided him with a compass.

"The subject matter didn't hurt, but his drawing was so dynamic and his use of colour was so surprising compared to a lot of the other illustrators who were working in that genre," Pace said of the appeal of the elder statesman's work

"A lot of them don't seem to be classically trained. A lot of them don't seem to understand colour the way Frazetta does.

The Incredible Hulk is TM and © Marvel Comics Group

"He was the best that there was, and arguably, he's still the best."

With youth came naivete. Not knowing any better, Pace thought entering the comic industry would be a breeze. It wasn't.

Realizing that there was still a lot he had to learn, Pace enrolled in Sheridan College's art program. During the period before he began college, Pace also developed an appreciation for illustration.

"But I wanted to do comics rather than just wanting to do illustrations."

Pace's first professional art job was painting over Daerick Gross' pencils on a portion of an adaptation of the Vampire Lestat.

"It was a horrible experience," Pace explained. "The book was three months behind schedule and I was brought on

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to do the book myself but then they forced me to work with someone who was even more inexperienced that I was.

"I'm just happy the whole experience is behind me."

After working on illustrations for a time, Pace managed to catch on with Marvel Comics as the artist for Terror Inc.

"I kind of lucked out into one of those books that was about to be cancelled," Pace recalls. "They needed someone really, really fast who didn't care that the book wasn't selling."

From there, Pace moved on to a short stint. Saint Sinner. When it looked like the comic had run its course, Pace moved on.

"That's really the way comics go, you either hold on until it looks bad or until it goes away."

Since 1990, Pace has worked on such comic books as New Warriors, Rune, Pitt, Starman and X-Man. He's also provided artwork for comic-related projects involving the Hulk, Kilroy, Excalibur, Longshot and Star Wars.

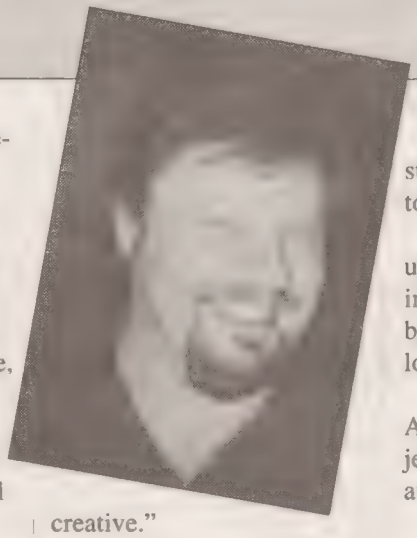
"The best things about comics is when you encounter people who are really great to work with," Pace said. "There's certain editors that I'd like to work with again, certain writers that I'd like to work with again. That's the primary good part of working in comics.

Among those whom he would like to work with again are James Robinson (Starman) and Bob Scherek (Batman)— "one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet).

"You're working with creative people and it's a pleasure to work with truly creative people as opposed to people who *think* they're creative."

"He was the best that there was, and arguably, he's still the best."

Pace on Frank Frazetta



The latter is particularly a sore spot for Pace who is a student of art and art history. Indeed, he seems miffed when comics seemingly underestimate its readers.

"For the most part, comics are sub-literate as a medium," Pace explained. "It's practitioned by people who are generally fans who really don't understand story. They want to tell the same stories that they read as a child growing up.

"There's only a dozen or 20 guys who actually understand the medium and what to do with it."

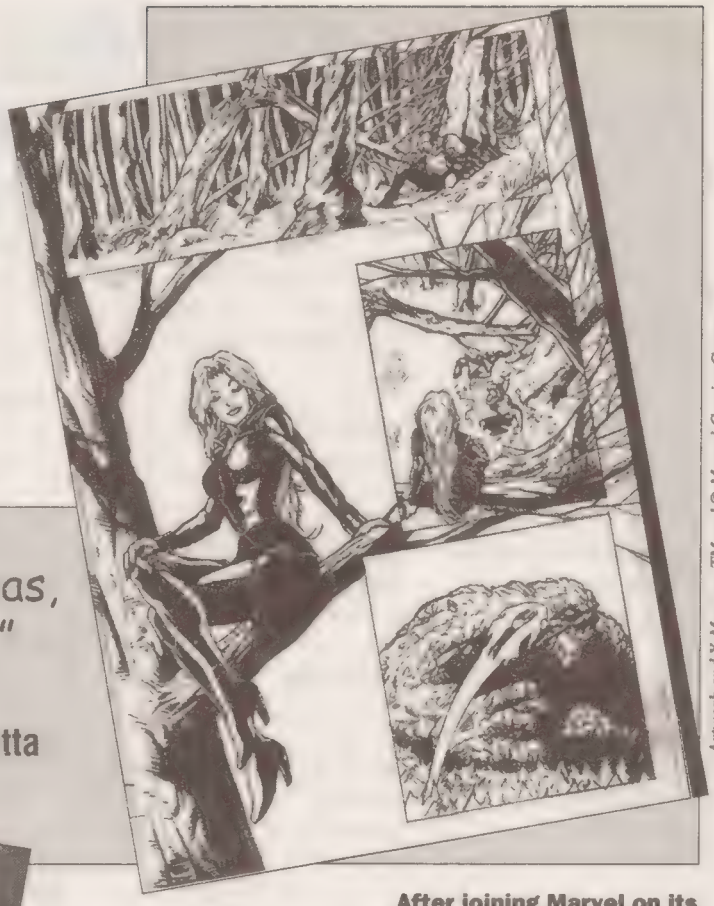
Sadly, one person who understood the medium and impressed Pace during a brief collaboration is no longer around.

"I started working with Archie Goodwin on a project, just before he passed away.

"Before I even touched pencil to paper we had four or five discussions that were so good in terms of discussing the creative process that I would have adopted him as my grandfather."

Now after about a decade of working within the comic book industry, Pace can see that his path is not dissimilar to the one taken by his inspiration.

After his time in the comic industry, Pace too has begun focusing a lot of his creative energy on projects outside of comics.



Artwork and X-Man are TM and © Marvel Comics Group

After joining Marvel on its late title, Terror Inc., Pace moved on to work with such characters as the Hulk and on such titles as X-Man (above).

Among the areas Pace has entered is the roleplaying game industry.

"I've started to do a lot of illustrations for roleplaying games and it's really sharpened up my skills," Pace said. "Working in comics for so long, you do so little painting or actual straight-up illustration.

"In a real sense, considering all of the comics work that I've turned down lately in favour of just pure illustrative work, I think I'm following the Frazetta route without consciously trying."

Comic Shop Directory

British Columbia

Comic & Book Emporium	1247 Granville St., Vancouver, V6Z 1M5	(250) 682-3019	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS	
Curious Books and Comics	631 Johnson St., Victoria, V8W 1M7	(250) 384-1656	C	BI	RPG	AS	MI	AP	CC	M	Md	WL	
Up-Start Comics & Games	1483A Bowen Rd., Nanaimo, V9S 1G4	(250) 741-0101	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS	

Alberta

Comic-Kazi	Northland Village, Calgary, P2L 2J8	(403) 286-0544	C	BI	RPG	AS	Md	M	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B	
Saturn Comics	5726 104 St., Edmonton, T6H 2K2	(780) 430-0598	C	BI	RPG	AS	B	M	AP	CC	OL	Cat	WL		**

Saskatchewan

8th Street Books & Comics	1010 8th St. E., Saskatoon, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	B
Phoenix Comics	2806 Dewdney Ave., Regina, S4T 0X7	(306) 757-9091	C	RPG	BI	AS	CC	M	WL	B

Manitoba

Comic Cave	1104 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, S7H 0R9	(306) 318-9636	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	Cat	OL

Ontario

Big B Comics	1045 James St..	Hamilton, L8K 1B4	(905) 312-6977	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B	
Comics North	106 Elm St.	Sudbury, P3C 1T5	(705) 674-1015	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M	HS	WL
Now & Then	90 Queen St. S.	Kitchener, N2G 1V9	(519) 744-5571	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M		WL

Quebec

Empire Comics	1221 Crescent St..,Montreal, H3G 2B1	(514) 871-1402	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B

Prince Edward Island

The Comic Hunter	173 Queen St. Charlottetown, C1A 4B4	(902) 566-2926	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B

New Brunswick

Stange Adventures Comic Books															
	384 Queen St. Fredericton, E3B 1B2	(506) 450-3759	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md
Halley's Comics	25 charlotte St. St. John's, E2L 2H3	(506) 693-4835	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md

Nova Scotia

Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games														
	79 Alderney Dr.Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7	(902) 466-8884	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	AS	M	
Websligers	Halifax Shopping Ctr., Halifax, B3C 2H8	(902) 455-4949	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B	AS	HS	

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BI = Back Issues	AR = Anime Rented	AP = Apparel	M = Magazines
RPG = Roleplaying Games	MO = Mail Order	Cat = Catalogue Available	Md = Models

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Comic news and more in every issue

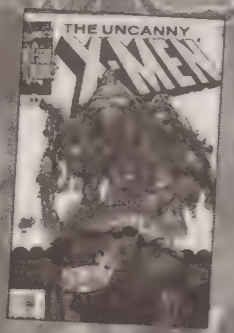
PARSEC's Top 10 Countdown

These are the top selling books in Canada, according to a national survey of retailers. To find out who's taking part in the survey, please see page 70

#1 X-Men 103

A new leader for the X-Men.
Story: Chris Claremont
Art: Tom Raney

#2 Uncanny X-Men 383



X-Men for sale... neat sketch pad.
Story: Chris Claremontn
Pencils: Adam Kubert
Inks: Dan Panosian

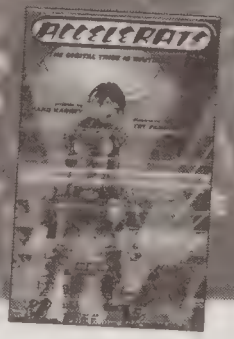
#3 Preacher 64

Story: Garth Ennis
Pencils: Steve Dillon

#4 Spawn 96

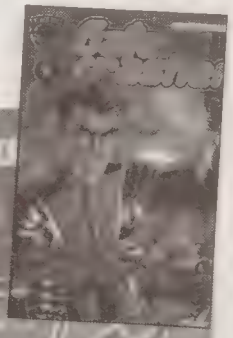
Story: Chris Claremont
Art: Lenil Francis Yu
Who's hunting the mutants now?

#5 Accelerate 1



Story: Richard Kadrey
Pencils: Pander Bros.

#6 Rising Stars 8



The Specials become more special
Story: J. Michael Straczynski
Pencils: Christian Zanier

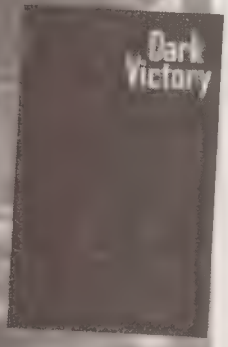
#7 Gate crasher 1

Second time in the Top 10.
Story: Mark Waid
Pencils: Amanda Conner

#8 Knights of the Dinner Table 43

Story: various
Pencils: various

#9 Batman: Dark Victory 9



Story: Jeph Loeb
Art: Tim Sale

#10 Warlands 7

Story: Alvin Lee
Art: Pat Lee
Inks: Angelo Tsang

Comics, anime, software, fiction, news... **Parsec** Comics, anime, software, fiction, news... **Parsec** Comics, anime, software, fiction, news... **Parsec**

Where does the future of mankind lie?

DOWNCAST

Story by
Isaac Szpindel
&
Eugene W. Roddenberry

Art by
J.P. Normand

Nicky liked the gorillas best because their faces were the friendliest of all the animals at the zoo. Nicky was certain of it, and if anyone had bothered to ask him, he would have told them so. But no one ever did. Even though he was thirty-five years old, Nicky's thoughts and desires didn't seem to matter much to anyone at all. Instead, people made his decisions for him and simply told him what to do.

At the zoo, things were different. Nicky could spend hours at the gorilla habitat and no one would tell him what to do and no matter what Nicky said or did, the gorillas regarded him calmly, letting out an occasional grunt, but never a command.

Because of the sun accident and the radiation, the summer days were getting hotter. So on this day, Nicky had slipped out early to get to the zoo in the morning when the air was still cool and the gorillas were at play. He pressed himself up against the habitat's observation window and ignored everything but the world inside.

Dodo, the largest of three silver-back mountain gorillas rubbed his flanks against a thick artificial log. Tufts of sterling-grey hair joined the patches of black that had accumulated on the concrete floor. The size of four men, Dodo finished scratching and moved through the habitat on two massive arms and a pair of shorter legs.

Mimi, a smaller female with long breasts, and Bubu, a toddler the size of Nicky's two-year-old neighbour, lived in the habitat with Dodo.

The habitat was made up of a wall-sized plexi-glass observation window set in a large concrete box. At its centre a large fake tree spread its branches. A mess of artificial vines formed a web on the limbs. At the back a barred holding-cage stuck out of one corner beside a metal door that the zookeepers came through to fill a large grey food barrel.

Nicky watched Bubu jump onto and spin from a tire-swing that hung from the tree's largest branch. Mimi perched on a root nearby, munching a handful of fruit and grass. Dodo was in his usual spot, hidden in a corner behind the observation window's frame. It was a good hiding spot. Most people who visited the habitat noticed only Mimi and Bubu and left complaining about how small and disappointing the gorillas were. Those who looked closer to find Dodo often jumped back when they saw how huge he was. Nicky had once seen a young lady run off screaming after she found Dodo. To Nicky this was unbelievable. Dodo's thin lips always seemed to smile at Nicky and Dodo's dark generous seemed to almost speak to him. At that moment, they did something that Nicky had seen before. They looked away for a moment to tell Nicky that someone was coming.

Nicky followed the direction from Dodo's eyes to find two pimply boys trading punches and running up the treeless path toward him. The first was a tall boy in a bright red head-shield with a racing stripe down the middle. The second boy looked smaller beside him and wore a plain gray head-shield and a big new leather jacket that made him sweat. As the boys came closer, the smell from the boy's Jacket was so strong that Nicky could taste it.

"Hey, Monkey-boy, want a banana?" The tall boy asked Nicky, even though he didn't seem to have a banana in his hand.

"You going to answer us, Monkey-boy?" asked the boy in the jacket.

"Forget it," said the tall boy. "Monkeys don't talk."

"I know all their names," said Nicky, searching for a response.

"He can talk," said the boy in the jacket. "Looks like we got us the missing link here." The boys laughed. Nicky didn't understand the joke.

"Got that, Monkey-boy?" said the tall boy, slapping Nicky's back so hard that it made a sound like a drum and knocked Nicky forward into the observation window.

Nicky felt an arm go up around the back of his neck and braced himself for a beating. He had been beaten many times and in many places before, but the zoo was different. The zoo was supposed to be his place. A place to feel safe and the fact the beating was coming in front of Dodo, made it worse. As Nicky suspected, Dodo didn't take it well.

A second blow to Nicky's head brought Dodo to his feet. Teeth bared, he beat his chest, let out a furious roar, and charged at the window. Nicky felt the boys loosened their hold for a moment as they froze at the sight, but only for a moment. Dodo had run out of room and stood trapped behind the observation window, his breath steaming the inside surface.

The boys laughed, then the tall boy pressed his face to the window and stuck his tongue out at Dodo. Dodo blinked slowly and steamed a patch of breath the size of the boy's head onto the window. The boys laughed louder as Dodo raised his arm in the air, but stopped when Dodo's palm came crashing down in a deafening slap into the patch of breath. The observation window bounced out, smacked the tall boy in the face and sent him tumbling, blood dripping from his nose.

Nicky expected and could tell from the person's head-shield that it was his sister, Aegie. She would be mad enough that he had gone somewhere without telling her. If she had witnessed any of the event with the boys she would be convinced of it.

The boy in the jacket released Nicky and went to help his friend straighten his head-shield and get to his feet. Together, they took a long look at Nicky and Dodo and ran back the way they came.

On their way, they nearly knocked someone over coming up the path the opposite way. Nicky could tell from the person's head-shield that it was his sister, Aegie. She would be mad enough that he had slipped out without telling her. If she had seen what had happened with the boys she'd be even madder.

"I was worried," said Aegie, stopping and straightening Nicky's hair.

"I-I'm okay," said Nicky.

"Look at what they did to you," said Aegie, her cheeks red, like her hair, and the skin around her eyebrows white like when she was angry.

"Nothing happened," said Nicky, too quickly. The thickness of his tongue made him trip over his words.

"You're better than they are," said Aegie, offering her hand. Aegie said that all the time when Nicky got into trouble. Nicky didn't believe it any more now than he had after the first few times. "Now, come on."

Nicky turned back to the habitat. Dodo was back in his corner. Except for the palm mark in the breath on the observation window, it was like nothing had happened. Nicky's bruises told him otherwise. Slowly he waved goodbye and took Aegie's hand. Her touch was warm and comforting as always and it made Nicky feel safe and ashamed all at once.

Aegie's face changed as the redness flowed out of her cheeks and back around her mouth and eyebrows. "Come along, now. Let's get back to work."

☆ ☆ ☆

Nicky passed the familiar drive from the zoo to Aegie's lab at Duquesne watching for the main battery level on the car's dash to change. The distance from the zoo was sometimes enough to drain a battery, especially during the weekday Pittsburgh rush. But it was summer so the traffic was light and the temperature warm enough that even Aegie's old car could go long without a recharge. It was one of the things that Aegie let Nicky do and Nicky had to pay attention and charge the car when it needed so they wouldn't get stuck on their way to work.

Aegie provided for everything in Nicky's life, including his work. She ran the laboratory and Nicky was the janitor, mostly. Sometimes, Nicky helped Aegie's research by himself taking tests, and by letting Aegie take samples from the inside of his cheek. It wasn't a part of his job that he liked, but it was important to Aegie. The rest of his work he enjoyed because he knew he was good at it.

Nicky kept the lab spotless. Every day, when they left, Nicky made sure the lights and water-taps were shut-off, the windows closed, and the door was locked. It annoyed Nicky that Aegie always double-checked him, because he had never forgotten. Until now.

It hit Nicky as soon as they came up the stairs. The laboratory door was open. Shocked, he moved toward it, but Aegie raised a finger to stop him and stepped ahead of him. Nicky caught enough of a glimpse from behind her to see movement inside the lab. Holding Nicky back, Aegie slid through the doorway. Nicky tried to push in quietly behind her, but bumped into the door and made it creak.

The sound startled a man that Nicky hadn't seen before and made him look up from Aegie's computer. He had a serious expression, but a kind smile, and he was almost as short as Nicky. The overhead lights shined off his bald head, and he wore a charcoal three-piece suit over a white shirt with no tie. An ID tag swung from his breast pocket.

Nicky looked around quickly, checking for damaged or missing items. A jungle of sinks, fume hoods, beakers, pipettes and complicated machinery seemed undisturbed along the three Formica topped benches that supported them. Off the end of the middle bench, a cart held a large computer. Numbers, letters and pictures streamed down the computer's panel making the man's face glow and flicker.

"What the hell is this?" Aegie barked, the skin around her eyebrows and mouth creasing and going pale.

Without waiting for an answer she removed her head-shield, handed it to Nicky and confronted the man. Aegie examined his identification tag and asked, "Dr. Little?"

"Yes, I've been authorized to—," the man tried to answer.

"To break and enter?" Aegie accused, her long red hair falling onto Little's scalp like it was trying to cover his

baldness.

Nicky almost laughed, but he could tell by the sound of Aegie's voice and the way she looked that she wouldn't think it was funny. Instead, he focused on her head-shield. Its shape and the gauges in its surface reminded him of Fred Friendly's helmet from the old Mutant Motorcycle-Men comics. Still, it felt heavy and looked uncomfortable. Nicky was glad he didn't have to wear one and he was glad for the building's insulation so that people like Aegie didn't have to wear them inside.

Dr. Little's head-shield already hung on an old-style hat rack in the corner of the lab. As Nicky approached it, his reflection distorted and stretched in its polished black surface. It was a funny sight, but it didn't help distract Nicky from Aegie and Little's conversation.

"I expected more cooperation," said Dr. Little, softly.

Aegie's voice grew louder. "Cooperation? You've intruded on my lab unannounced and uninvited."

"You are publicly funded," said Little. "You agreed to regular reviews."

Aegie snapped back at Dr. Little with such anger that it made it difficult for Nicky to understand why she was so upset or to follow the conversation. Instead, Nicky lost himself in his work and the security of his cleaning supplies.

The bottles, sprays, and tools were well organized in their plastic basket, as usual. The order helped Nicky concentrate and it helped him think. No doubts about where to start or what to do next. The detergent meant the floor; the spray bottle, the countertop. Nicky simply started with the first item in the basket, used it, then moved on to the next. Simple decisions that filled Nicky with pride because they were his own, no one else's.

"...Down's Syndrome." Dr. Little's words drew Nicky back to the conversation. Words he recognized, words that told Nicky they were talking about him.

"Trisomy 21." Aegie corrected.

"You are supposed to be researching the source of their radiation immunity, that's all. Your most recent materials requests: retroviruses, recombinant vectors and gene fragments. They're curious, to say the least."

"I need a more precise map of the genome."

"The genome, Dr. Hoberman, has been fully mapped and available since 2000. These are invasive technologies. Ones that imply experimentation in genetic modification."

"You want a cure, don't you?" said Aegie.

"That's someone else's job, once you accomplish yours and we understand what makes them immune. So few Down's cases remain, we don't want to risk them on unauthorized experimentation."

Nicky noticed Dr. Little watching him mop his way across the laboratory floor. It made Nicky uncomfortable and it made him feel like he had to speak. "I'm her brother," he said, hoping it was an appropriate comment.

Little's eyebrows shot up and his eyes went wide. "Oh," said Little, gently. "I... I'm sorry."

Now Nicky was surprised. People talked about him like he wasn't there all the time. This was the first time that anyone had actually spoken to him and it was definitely the first time anyone had apologized.

"You're experimenting on family members?" Dr. Little asked.

"How dare you." Aegie's voice rose again. "I've protected him his entire life, when our parents walked out, when no one else would. Who the hell are you to question me?"

Dr. Little's kindness and Aegie's anger confused and upset Nicky. He could tell they were arguing and it made it hard for Nicky to concentrate on his work. There were too many words and too many were about him. The argument was his fault. They were being mean to each other because of him.

Nicky stopped cleaning as the sick feeling rose in his stomach. He had always thought he was helping Aegie, that she needed he needed him in some way. Now, he wasn't so sure.

"I'm just following protocol," said Little, "Protecting our resources. Allow me to run a genetic profile on him. If it reveals no genetic manipulation or experimentation, we'll be satisfied. We'll leave you alone."

Nicky didn't hear any more. He didn't want tests, he didn't want profiles, and he certainly didn't want to cause Aegie trouble. He didn't like arguments and he was tired of other people deciding what he should do. The problem was that he didn't know what to do. What to do? What could he do, except...

Run.

☆ ☆ ☆

Nicky knew which buses to take to the zoo, whether it was from home or from work. He also always carried his public transit-chip with him in case he got lost, so it was no problem for him to get back to the zoo and to Dodo.

The habitat was as he had left it. Dodo's hand-print stayed stamped on the observation window and reminded Nicky of the morning's events. Fascinated, he tried to fit his own palm into its huge shape. But Nicky's fingers were too short and plump. He had the same number of fingers, but the fingerprints, creases and swirls were fewer and more spread out. Before long, Nicky noticed something else. One wide line ran all the way across Dodo's palm-print from end to end. Nicky looked at his own hand. He had one, too. Excited that he and Dodo had something in common, Nicky continued to look for other similarities. Caught up in this new adventure, it took a few moments for Nicky to notice Aegie's helmeted reflection bob onto the observation window.

"I didn't know what to do," said Nicky to Aegie's reflection. "You were so mad. And, and it was because of me."

"No. I'm sorry, I was trying to protect you... us." Aegie stroked Nicky's back affectionately. Dodo watched on silently through the window then looked away, following something down the path behind them.

Nicky turned, expecting to see the boys again. Instead, he found Dr. Little running toward them. Dr. Little stopped running as he reached Nicky and Aegie. He didn't look angry and he even looked relieved despite the fact that he had forgotten his head-shield.

Aegie spun around. "What are you doing here?"

Dr. Little held his hands up. "I-I thought I might help you find him. I felt responsible."

"And you forgot your head-shield? How considerate." Aegie used her nasty tone, like when she didn't mean what she said.

"We really are concerned for his safety," Little answered.

"I'm his sister, Dr. Little, I'll decide what's best for Nicky." It's what she had done for Nicky his entire life. He should have been more grateful for it too, but lately it had started to frustrate Nicky. Nicky wanted to be more independent. To be treated more like an adult. But Aegie wouldn't let him.

"What about your research?" asked Little. "Isn't this a small inconvenience to subject him to, if it allows you to continue your research?"

Aegie didn't answer right away. "I can be there? For the tests?" she asked. "If he checks out, you won't bother us?"

Little nodded, but wouldn't look at Aegie or Nicky.

"Then I'll have to consider it." Aegie took Nicky's hand and led him down the path, away from the habitat, stopping only to call back to Dr. Little. "Come by the lab tomorrow. This time don't let yourself in, and please, don't follow us home."

☆ ☆ ☆

Nicky's room at their apartment was cluttered with i-toys, holo-comics and morph-models that surrounded a twin bed made-up in Fred Friendly linen. A long window let the sunset draw an angry red square on the floor behind a small writing desk that supported a VR net-node and an e-art-pad. Nicky preferred crayon and paper, but Aegie said they were too messy and that paper was getting hard to find.

Aegie sat beside Nicky on the bed, helping him on with his pajamas. Nicky hated when she did this because it made him feel like a kid and he was a man now.

"We have to be careful, Nicky. Most people don't want to help you."

"Like Dr. Little?" Nicky asked, hoping he was wrong.

"No. I think his problem is with me."

"Because of me?" Nicky asked, again hoping to be wrong.

"No, it's my fault," Aegie answered and buttoned his top. "I'm not really doing the research I'm supposed to be doing." Her answer relieved Nicky. He always assumed that any trouble they had was his fault, and he was usually right. Since the sun accident, normal people blamed Nicky and people like him for not having the problems that they did. It was all very confusing.

Nicky understood very little of what had happened. He remembered being told that the scientists tried to make energy by using a huge machine they built in space on the sun. But it didn't work. Instead, the machine made the sun start to get old and eat helium. It sounded funny to Nicky, and even though nobody could really see or feel it yet the scientists said the sun was going to get bigger and turn red. The sun was making more radiation, so things on earth were going to get hotter and brighter, and all the water was turning into clouds.

Aegie said that for now the clouds were protecting everyone because the problems were just starting, but that even the clouds couldn't protect some plants and animals that ate them. Because of that there was already less food for people to eat even though there were more and more people all the time. What was worse was that the sun was hurting the people too. Aegie told him that people were growing things like golf-balls and grapefruits in their heads, but not the kinds you could eat. That's why they had to wear head-shields. Nicky and people like him didn't grow anything in their heads and it was Aegie's job to find out why. Nicky liked to help, but people didn't care. Since there was less food and more

Aegie regarded Nicky for a long moment. "I can be there? For the tests?" she asked. "If he's genetically intact, you promise not to bother us?"

population, lots of people were starving. Nicky had heard people say that people like him were wasting food.

"People will appreciate you," said Aegie, reading his mind. "When my research makes you like them."

"But you're supposed to be helping them. So they won't have to wear head-shields. Won't they be mad if you help me instead?"

"Not when they realize that it won't work. Not unless we make everyone like you."

"Oh," said Nicky, knowing that nobody wanted to be like him. Still, he liked who he was, so he never really understood why Aegie wanted to change him. "Will I have to wear a head-shield?"

"I don't know," Aegie answered. "Probably."

"Then can I have a motorcycle, Like Fred Friendly?"

"If you want one. But first we have to satisfy Dr. Little."

"He's a nice man," said Nicky, sliding under his covers and snuggling into his pillow.

"I don't know," said Aegie. "Still, he seems to be concerned for your safety." Aegie kissed Nicky's forehead, tucked him in, then pulled the blind and switched off the light.

"You're going to let him test me?" Nicky asked.

"I'll have to decide," Aegie answered in the darkness.

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Nicky was sure his mind was playing tricks on him. The scene was almost the same as the day before. The laboratory door was open, but this time men in uniforms stood outside. Maybe, thought Nicky, Dr. Little had let himself in again.

Aegie must have thought the same thing, because instead of acting surprised she just walked right in. "I thought I told you not to—"

Aegie stopped. This time the man who stood over Aegie's computer wasn't Dr. Little. The new man was tall and thin like a skeleton. He wore an extra thick head-shield and had a jagged scar up the center of his forehead. Nicky had seen this scar before on people who had their golf-balls and grapefruits taken out.

The man checked the computer and the bench behind it with a laser attached to a small machine that made lots fingerprints glow red on the surfaces.

"What the hell is this? Where the hell is Little?" Aegie demanded, clamping her hand down on Nicky's shoulder to tell him not to speak or move.

"Sorry, Ma'am. Samuel Yazik, SIA," said the man, flashing his badge and holding out his hand. Aegie didn't take it. "We have reason to believe that you've been a victim of industrial

espionage." He held his PDA out to Aegie. A bad picture of Little with a number and bar-code underneath showed on the screen.

"That's Dr. Little," Nicky blurted out.

"He said he was a Doctor," Aegie added.

"He is. This one likes to grab Retards. Hard to come by Tards these days," said Yazik, glancing at Nicky. "I'm sure you know." Nicky hated being called a retard and he didn't like Yazik, the way he spoke, or the way he smelled of stale cherry lozenges.

"He's our janitor," answered Aegie, the skin around her eyebrows and mouth going an angry white. Nicky wondered why Aegie looked so mad, but acted so nice.

Yazik considered Nicky like something he'd scraped off his shoe. "Lots of normal people looking for honest work these days."

Nicky searched for his equipment. He hadn't finished cleaning the lab the day before and it looked like someone else had put his cleaners away. What if they were in the wrong order?

"He's also part of my shield research," said Aegie, tapping her forehead in a place that might have matched Yazik's scar. Nicky shifted uncomfortably, but Aegie wouldn't let go. He needed help with his cleaners and he was afraid of Yazik. He needed Aegie to let go, or tell him what to do.

"How did he contact you?" asked Yazik.

"He just showed up. Same as you," Aegie answered.

"Did he take anything, try to take anything?"

"No, nothing, except..." Aegie glanced at Nicky.

"Wanted your Tard, huh?"

Aegie's eyes narrowed. "He was looking through my data."

"Then probably got it all, lucky he didn't get your Tard too. Cure for the brain-balls is worth a lot of food. If you ask me, though, the Tards aren't worth it—eat too much."

Aegie's whole face lost its colour and she began to shake. Nicky knew she didn't like bad talk. Why wasn't she yelling at Yazik or threatening him? "He's meeting us here today," she said.

Nicky was confused. He knew that Aegie hated words like Tard, but she was being nice to Mr. Yazik, even helping him. Dr. Little behaved nicely and Aegie had been mean to him. Something was wrong, but Nicky couldn't figure out what it was.

"Then I'll wait here." Yazik sat down on the chair at the computer and unbuttoned his jacket so that Nicky could see his stunner. Aegie must have seen it too because she started to speak quickly, like when she got nervous and her face looked serious.

"If you won't be needing us," Aegie suggested to Yazik.

"Later, to ID the perp," Yazik answered, absently. "Just you, though, Ma'am. Your Tard stays here, for insurance."

"Why? Why would you need insurance?" Aegie asked.

Yazik was silent for a moment, like he was thinking. "Those are my orders, Ma'am."

"Of course," Aegie said, giving in too easily, "He'll need to relieve himself first."

Even Nicky knew that Yazik was lying. If he could figure it out, then why didn't Aegie? Why was she cooperating?

"No," answered Yazik.

"Fine, you deal with the mess."

Yazik looked at Nicky, disgusted. "Fine. Suit yourself."

Aegie's whole face lost its colour and she began to shake. Nicky knew she didn't like bad talk. Why wasn't she yelling at Yazik or threatening him? "He's meeting us here today," she said.

Aegie led Nicky out of the lab, past the guards, then down the brick hall to the bathroom. She surprised Nicky by following him in, then confused him completely by climbing onto a toilet, opening the window above and climbing through. Once outside, she reached down to help Nicky do the same. Nicky hardly had time to worry about where they were going or why.

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Finding himself back at the zoo, Nicky quickly forgot his confusion. Aegie led him up the path toward the Gorilla habitat so fast that Nicky had to skip every few steps just to keep up. Finally, he gave up, and ran ahead to the habitat.

Things had changed. Dodo's hand-print was gone and Dodo was missing from his usual spot. Instead, a man in a khaki zoo uniform and matching head-shield mopped the habitat floor with a green liquid from a large barrel like the one that held the gorilla food. Nicky recognized the liquid as Mr. Sparkle, The Dirt Destroyer, from its bright green colour. It was supposed to smell like a pine tree but Nicky found that it was much stronger and that it burned his nose. Nicky watched the man spray water from a hose over the area he had mopped and knew he was doing it because Mr. Sparkle was a skull and cross-bones cleaner.

Behind the man, Nicky found Dodo locked in the holding area and looking out from between the bars. Nicky could also see Mimi pacing back and forth past Dodo, but he couldn't see Bubu.

"Where's, Bubu," Nicky asked the window and himself and started searching for Bubu until he became distracted by Aegie's reflection in the observation window.

Aegie's reflection sat beside another reflection of a man sitting on the bench behind Nicky. Nicky forgot Bubu and focused on the reflection. The man looked very much like Dr. Little. So much so that Nicky turned to check. It was Dr. Little.

"I barely avoided Yazik at the lab. I knew he'd be watching your home, so this was the next best place," said Little.

"I thought you might turn up here sooner or later," Aegie confessed.

"Then why didn't you turn me in?"

"I needed to figure things out for myself. Yazik lied to me." Aegie spoke calmly so Nicky had to strain to listen.

"I lied to you, too," said Little.

"Yes, but you were concerned for Nicky when he ran—like he was a human being, not a lab rat. That doesn't sound like an industrial spy to me."

"I'm not," said Dr. Little. "I want Nicky."

"Why? You must have interpreted my data by now. It's useless, the radiation immunity trait requires three

chromosome twenty ones. You have to have Down's for it to work."

"I know."

"Then what good is he?" asked Aegie.

"I'm not interested in radiation immunity. I'm interested in the continuation of humanity."

"Then why do you need people with Down's?"

"We want him and everyone like him to live out their lives," said Little, removing his head shield and wiping away the sweat, "free to interact with each other, happy safe and free."

"Like a concentration camp. Put them to work and get rid of them so there's more food for everyone else?"

"No. Like Adam and Eve. Gene therapies are preventing Down's in utero. They're dying out. If it wasn't for their radiation immunity, they'd be legislated out of existence. We've thought about reproducing the factor that gives them a higher chance of having Down's offspring but, as you know, no one's been able to identify it."

"So you want to preserve them, like some pathetic museum exhibit? That's just as bad."

"Those neurofibrillary tangles and amyloid deposits that accumulate in their brains. The ones that stunt their intelligence and cause Alzheimer's when they get older? Now they're soaking up all that excess solar radiation, absorbing it and breaking it down. Constituent amino acids and protein bases are being redistributed. According to our tests, their levels of intelligence have shown a steady improvement since the accident. Furthermore, ..." Nicky lost the conversation and returned his attention to the habitat. He knew he was looking for something, but he had forgotten what. Nicky searched for a while until some words in the conversation drew him back again.

"It sounds plausible," said Aegie. "So they'll develop normal intelligence in several hundreds instead of millions of years? Nicky can't wait that long, nor can I."

Little continued, "Our sun is only at the earliest stages of its accelerated shift to red giant. So far, the brain tumours and the food supply are the only physical manifestations. Soon there will be others due to the effects of the sun's changing gravitation and higher ambient luminosity to name a few. Our estimation is that, to best survive, people will need to be strong and of short stature. They'll probably need thick muscular tongues to help them just to speak properly; Epicanthal folds to protect their eyes from the bright light. Just like people with Down's—" Little's PDA beeped at him. He lifted it from his pocket and scanned the screen with an expression that now matched Aegie's.

"Are you suggesting that Trisomy Twenty-one is the next adaptation? The next step in human evolution?"

Little fidgeted with his shield and spoke more quickly. "It wasn't supposed to happen for billions of years, but our technological arrogance has advanced the time-table. The sun's killing the rest of us and we're nowhere near developing space travel or off-world colonization capabilities. Unless the Down's population survives to carry on, we never will, and the human race dies out with the sun."

A shrieking sound drew Nicky's attention back to the habitat. Through the observation window he found Dodo roaring furiously and slamming his body repeatedly into the holding area bars. The noise distracted the man cleaning the habitat for only a moment before he returned to his mopping, ignoring Dodo's wild tantrum. Nicky searched the habitat, desperate to find some way to help Dodo. Instead, he found something else—Bubu. Bubu was locked out of the holding area and playing behind the man, near the barrel of Mr. Sparkle.

The man rushed over, plunged his arms into the barrel and hauled Bobo out onto the concrete floor. Bobo thrashed and coughed green liquid as a blast of water from the man's hose hit him. Green droplets of spray bounced off Bobo, continuing until the colour faded and the stream stopped.

Bubu danced around Mr. Sparkle and, ignoring Dodo's screams, climbed the barrel, and slid inside. Green water splashed from the barrel onto the concrete floor, but the man didn't notice. Nicky knew he had to do something, and quickly, before Mr. Sparkle hurt Bubu.

"Aegie?" Nicky called.

Aegie held her finger out to Nicky. She didn't want him to bother her.

"But, Aegie?" Nicky whined desperately.

"Not now, Nicky, this is important," Aegie called back.

Bubu's splashing slowed and the shrieking got louder now that Mimi had joined in. Nicky paced back and forth in front of the window. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore, turned, and ran down the path to Little and Aegie.

Aegie looked up. "I thought I told you, this is imp—"

Nicky ignored her and grabbed Little's head-shield.

"Hey!" Little shouted, as Nicky bolted back up the path to the habitat window.

Smack. Little's head-shield bounced off the observation window. Through the reflection, Nicky could see Aegie and Little coming up the path after him.

Smack. The plexi-glass scuffed the shield. The man inside still didn't notice. Aegie and Little neared.

Smack. The man looked up curiously at Nicky and looked annoyed when he noticed the head-shield in Nicky's hands. Nicky didn't have time to apologize, Bubu's splashing had almost stopped. He waved his arms wildly at the man and pointed to the barrel behind him. The man frowned, turned to see what the fuss was about, then found Bubu drowning in the barrel.

The man rushed over, reached into the barrel and dragged Bubu out onto the floor. Bubu struggled on the concrete and coughed Mr. Sparkle as a blast of water from the man's hose hit him. Green water ran off Bubu, continuing until the colour became clear and the stream from the hose stopped.

Bubu coughed, got up on his arms and wobbled over to the bars and his parents. Their arms reached through and hugged him close.

The man put down his hose and smiled at Nicky. It looked to Nicky like Dodo was watching him and doing the same thing.

"We saw that, Nicky," said Little breaking the spell.

"You saved him," Aegie said. "I-I'm sorry, I should have listened."

She should be, thought Nicky, he was a hero and it was because he done something himself. He had made a decision for a change. Aegie and Dr. Little must have known it too. They were looking at him and smiling like they may even have respected him. But there was more from Little. He was moving around, fiddling with his PDA. Nicky raised his eyebrows at him.

"Yazik's people followed you here," said Little, between checks of his PDA, "I have a way out, but not enough time to explain. I want Nicky to come with me and I need a decision."

"Even if I believed you," said Aegie. "I still think he's better off with me."

Aegie and Little stared each other, but no one spoke. This was Nicky's chance. He had showed Aegie that he could do things on his own. Good things. Maybe, living on his own with other people like him he could do more good things. Like Dr. Little said. If Aegie would let him. But why was it her choice?

"Ask me," said Nicky, "I heard what you said. I know what you want."

"He's right," said Little. "It should be his choice."

Aegie seemed to be looking though the window at Bubu, still up against the bars in his parents' arms.

"I know," said Aegie quietly. Nicky could see tears forming in her eyes. It almost never happened, but Nicky had seen her cry before. "You heard?"

"I didn't mean to." Nicky apologized.

"No, it's okay," Aegie continued. "You understood?"

"I want to go," said Nicky, almost afraid.

"You realize how close I am to curing you," said Aegie. "My research is going to make you normal, like the rest of us."

"I know," Nicky answered. "But I want to be like me. I want to be where that's okay." Nicky didn't want to make Aegie cry, but he could tell from the tears on her face that that's what he was doing.

"I don't know if I can let you," said Aegie through the tears. "You don't know what you're..."

"Let him find out," said Dr. Little. "You owe it to him. He's free to leave us if he's ever unhappy."

"But how do we know we can trust you?" Aegie asked.

"You don't," answered Little.

"Then I'll come too. I'll continue my research with you."

"I'm afraid that's impossible," Little said. "Don't forget, we've analyzed your data. You're close. Too close. If you reverse Down's, you'll eliminate what's left of their population. The few remaining live births that slip through the genetic screens, even the spontaneous mutations will be reversed and genetically modified by the therapies that you've developed. The Down's predisposition may be lost forever and we can't take that risk."

"What if you convince people of your theories, let people choose for themselves, until we can find a way to isolate and reproduce the Down's producing factor?"

"Do you think people will really accept Down's as the next stage in their evolution? How do you think the general public will react? With acceptance and gratitude, or with the same resentment and hostility they've shown so far?"

"It's my life's work—for Nicky," Aegie protested. "You can't be asking me to abandon it."

"Even if I believed you," said Aegie. "I still think he's better off with me."

"It's too late for that. Yazik has no doubt downloaded and distributed your data by now. You can't just abandon your research, you must discredit your work so others don't complete it."

"But that'll destroy me professionally. What if I refuse? Leaving me behind gains you nothing."

"It gains us our only real chance at discrediting your research—something that at this stage only you can accomplish. Taking you with us guarantees that will not happen."

"Then I'll join you—after. Tell me how."

"It will be anticipated. You will be watched and you will give us away."

"Did you hear that, Nicky?" Aegie turned to Nicky, tears flowing past her mouth. "You may never see me again."

Nicky nodded his head. He had heard Aegie say things like that before. They were like threats that she made when she wanted Nicky to do something. Aegie would find a way to be with him. He would see her again.

"What if I don't, can't let you go?" Aegie asked.

"You can't stop me," said Nicky, fighting back tears of his own. She couldn't stop him. He was smaller, but he was stronger than her, had always been, and now for the first time, knew why: he was better than other people.

"Nicky?" Aegie implored, extending her hand.

Nicky looked down at her palm and its broken folds. Two deep creases never meeting; so different from him and Dodo. He felt excited afraid and something else all at once. He could always go home if he didn't like it at Dr. Little's place.

"I'm sorry," said Little, reading off his PDA, "but we must leave now."

"Nicky?" Aegie pleaded. "I'll do it for you. I'll destroy my research, my reputation, but please. Please come home with me now."

Nicky shook his head, squeezing tears from the corners of his eyes. He had made the right decision. He was his own man now and that's what he had wanted for a long time. Something that Aegie wasn't helping him with. He didn't mean, didn't want, to hurt Aegie, but he was going to be important now and he was going to be himself.

Nicky looked past Aegie to Dodo. For a moment, it seemed like Dodo had lost his smile. Nicky waved him a weak goodbye with the tips of his fingers then turned to face Little.

"I'm scared," said Nicky, over the sound of Aegie crying.

"I know, Nicky," said Dr. Little, offering Nicky his hand. "So am I."

Nicky looked down at Little's palm. Like Aegie's, two deep separate lines across its surface all broken-up. Not like Nicky's and Dodo's lines at all. Still, Nicky had decided and, reaching out, he took hold of Little's hand, imagining for a moment his own perfect fold completing the broken lines underneath.

There's a value some place on a life

DOCTOR DEATH

Story by
Edo van Belkom
Art by
Terry Pallot

The dilapidated Chevy van pulled up to the rear door of the County Medical Examiner's office and the elderly man behind the wheel honked the horn three times.

After a minute's wait, the big door rolled up and the young clerk who worked the night shift waved hello.

The elderly man ran his fingers through his short-cropped snow-white hair, adjusted his thick-rimmed glasses and got out of the van.

"Evening, Jack," said the clerk.

"Hello Larry," the doctor nodded.

The two men said nothing as they worked. The old man unlocked the back doors of the van while the clerk went into the building for a gurney. When the wheeled table was in position behind the van, the old man pulled on the oblong black bag, sliding it out of the van and onto the table. When the bag was strapped down, he unzipped it so the clerk could see the face of the body inside.

"One seventy-three year-old white male named Franz-Joachim Maertz in the latter stages of Huntington's disease."

The clerk nodded and grabbed the end of the table.

Then the doctor zipped up the bag and together the two men wheeled the body inside.

☆ ☆ ☆

"Doctor Bedrossian," said the clerk. "The police are here."

Doctor Jack Bedrossian carefully tucked the corners of the black bag tight under the body so it wouldn't catch when he closed the drawer. "I'll be there in a minute," he said, slowly pushing the drawer closed.

After discussing the matter with local prosecutors, the elderly doctor had resumed bringing the suicide victims he assisted directly to the medical examiner's office. For months he had been leaving them alone in motel rooms to be found by cleaning ladies and delivery men making their rounds. While the practice put a bit of distance between himself and the deaths it was a somewhat undignified way for a body to be discovered and actually worked against what his assisted suicides were intended to achieve.

The stainless steel drawer slowly rolled shut and the heavy clasp on it clicked solidly into place. Doctor Bedrossian took a deep breath, let out a satisfied sigh, then turned and headed off to face the police.

DR. DEATH

After he'd assisted in more than two-dozen suicides it became clear that the matter needed to be handled by those who made the laws, rather than those who enforced them.

He'd been through this many times before. They would ask him a few questions, he would decline to answer them, and the whole interrogation would be over in a few minutes.

But it hadn't always been that way.

In the beginning the police had arrested him for murder and manslaughter and countless other crimes that prosecutors could never get a conviction for. After he'd assisted in more than two-dozen suicides it became clear that the matter needed to be handled by those who made the laws, rather than those who enforced them.

As a result, no one did anything, perhaps in the foolish hope that the matter would resolve itself, or that it might simply go away if they ignored it long enough.

Of course, it did not go away.

In fact, while the politicians tip-toed around the powder keg, Doctor Bedrossian stepped up his efforts, providing his help to anyone who asked for it.

To date, he had admitted to attending more than seventy suicides in and around the city, and his battered white van had become a familiar sight at the back door of the ME's office. In fact, he had been through it so often, it had all become routine.

The detective was waiting for him in the small area between the ME's office and the reception desk, leafing through a months-old copy of a medical magazine. He was a large man, three years from retirement with an overly proud midsection and exceedingly demure hairline. From the look on his face it seemed as if there were plenty of other places he'd rather be at the moment.

But all that changed the moment the doctor stepped into the room.

"Evening, doctor," the detective said, his face brightened by a toothy smile.

"Detective Branson," said the doctor. "It's good to see you. I hope your wife's feeling better."

"She sure is," said the detective, rising up to shake the doctor's hand. "When I told her that you were the one that suggested she try that tea she flat-out refused. Of course, I couldn't blame her for that."

The detective's voice trailed off as he shrugged his shoulders.

The doctor said nothing. He was used to such reactions to his efforts to help people get well.

"When her problem got worse, and she was willing to try just about anything, I reminded her about the tea. After a couple of pots the problem cleared right up."

"Wonderful," said the doctor, vigorously shaking the man's hand. "I'm so glad she's feeling better."

"Yeah," said the detective. "And I don't mind saying, she won't be needing any more of your medical advice, if you know what I mean."

The clerk who had been hovering in the doorway laughed.

Doctor Bedrossian didn't laugh, or look in the clerk's direction. He'd heard such jokes before, often made by the likes of Leno and Letterman. It had all become so old hat.

"So," said the detective, some of the joviality gone from his voice. "Do you wish to talk about the deceased..." He flipped through his notebook. "...uh, Mr. Maertz?"

"No," said the doctor. "I do not."

Detective Branson nodded. "The DA warned me you were going to say that."

The doctor said nothing more.

After an awkward moment of silence, the detective said, "All right, then. I guess you're free to go."

The doctor nodded. "Thank you, detective."

"Just don't skip town on us," the detective said.

"The police have always known where to find me."

"Right."

"My regards to your wife."

☆ ☆ ☆

The van's engine took a few seconds to catch, but it eventually started. The doctor pumped the gas pedal and the van rocked slightly as the old engine revved.

He put the van into gear and slowly rolled out of loading area. When he reached the street he flicked on his turn indicator and waited for a break in the traffic.

It was a busy night.

Suddenly there was a knock against his window. The doctor jumped in his seat at the sound, then turned to see what the devil was there.

It was a young dark-haired man, well-dressed and smiling.

"Doctor Bedrossian?" he said.

The doctor nodded and rolled the window down an inch. "What do you want?"

"I'd like to speak to you," he said, pausing a moment to look right and left. "About my mother."

It wasn't the first time he'd been approached by someone on the street. He had an unlisted number and didn't keep office hours so people got in touch with him any way they could. He rolled down the window a few more inches. "Get in."

The young man ran around the front of the van and hopped into the passenger seat.

"You want to go anywhere?" asked the doctor, pulling into traffic.

"No, my car's in the lot here," he said with a nod of his head. "Maybe we could just circle around for a while."

The doctor nodded, then after a few moments said, "What can I do for your mother?"

"Well," he began hesitantly. "You wouldn't be doing it for her as much as for me?"

"How ill is she?"

"She had breast cancer. She was fine the last five years, but now the cancer has spread to her lungs. It's so bad that the doctors haven't even bothered to find out if the cancer has spread anywhere else."

"She's in pain?"

"Yes."

"And she wants to die rather than endure the pain?"

"Well, not exactly."

Doctor Bedrossian made a right-hand turn at the intersection. "What do you mean, not exactly?"

"My sister just had her first child, my mother's first grandchild. My mother wants to spend every moment she can with the two of them."

"So she doesn't want to die."

"No, she cherishes every minute she has left."

The doctor took his eyes off the road and looked at the man.

"Then why have you come to me?"

"Let's just say I have a proposition for you... A business proposition."

The doctor returned his gaze to the road. "Oh?"

"You see, my mother is very wealthy. When my father died she took over his portfolio and through a couple of lucky investments tripled its net worth."

"What is its worth? If you don't mind me asking."

"Over ten million."

The doctor whistled through his teeth. "That is a lot of money, but ... if your mother is going to die in few months, what's the hurry? You'll get it eventually."

"Not if I'm dead I won't."

The doctor glanced over at the young man again and instantly got a mental image of the kind of person he was dealing with. He was young, good looking and from the way he was dressed, probably liked to spend money when he had it — maybe even when he didn't. When his mother was first diagnosed with cancer, he likely started spending money as if he'd already received his inheritance. When she ended up living another five years he found himself in the hole for several hundred thousand dollars. Judging by the desperate look on his face, that money was owed to an elderly Italian gentleman who conducted business from a table in the back of an espresso bar on St. Clair Avenue.

But while his mother was chronically ill, she had every reason to live. And every day she clung to life brought him one day closer to a violent end.

"Bad investments?" asked the doctor.

"Exactly."

"Why do you think I can help you?"

The young man laughed at that. "My mother's dying. You've delivered something like fifty bodies to the medical examiner's office. If you help her check out early and deliver her to the ME, no one is going to bat an eye."

"That's true, but what you're suggesting is murder."

"No, it isn't," he shook his head. "See, my mother's already dying. You'd just be helping her along."

"I suppose that's one way of looking at it."

"C'mon, doc. With all the suicides you've 'assisted,' you mean to tell me you've never slipped one in that wasn't quite ready to die?"

Doctor Bedrossian sighed. "I will admit, I have found myself in this sort of situation before."

"I knew it!" He slapped his knee. "I knew it!"

The doctor drove on in silence, making two more right-hand turns. Finally, he said, "If I help you, what's in it for me?"

The young man's face broke into a wide grin. "How does a half-million sound?"

"It sounds like a lot of money."

"Damn right it is, but the way I look at it, my life is worth it. You know."

"Oh, absolutely."

"And, judging by this piece of crap you're driving, it looks like you could do with some cash yourself."

"That is true."

He turned into the lot in front of the medical examiner's office and came to a stop next to what he guessed was the young man's car, a late model, bright red Jaguar.

"Here's my card," he said, handing him a tan-coloured embossed business card. Doctor Bedrossian turned it over quickly, eager to know what the man did for a living. But instead of a job title or profession, the card only listed the man's name, H. Lyle Worthington, his address, phone, cellular, and fax numbers, his email address and the URL for his web page. "Call me in the morning. We'll talk."

The doctor glanced over at the young man again and instantly got a mental image of the kind of person he was dealing with. He was young, good looking and from the way he was dressed, probably liked to spend money when he had it — maybe even when he didn't.

"Yes, we will," said the doctor, giving Mr. Worthington a slight salute.

The young man got out of the van and into his car, tooting his horn as he headed out of the lot.

Doctor Bedrossian watched him drive off, then headed home where he drank a glass of warm milk, watched the late-night news, and went to bed.

☆ ☆ ☆

The old Chevy van chugged up to the rear of the medical examiner's office and sputtered to a halt. Before the engine died it belched a cloud of thick grey smoke that lingered on the night air like a fog.

Doctor Bedrossian honked the horn three times and the rear door of the building immediately sprung open. The clerk on duty began coughing and waving a hand in front of him in an attempt to clear the fouled air.

"Evening, Jack," said the clerk between coughs.

"Hello Larry," the doctor nodded.

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"When are you going to get rid of this thing?" he said, motioning to the van. "Maybe it's your van that you should be putting out of its misery, eh?"

The doctor smiled at that. "As a matter of fact, I'll be shopping around for a new one this week. I'm leaning toward a Dodge."

"Yeah, they're nice."

In minutes they had slid the black body bag onto a gurney and were ready to wheel it into the building.

The doctor began pushing, but the clerk remained immobile.

"What have you got?"

"Oh," said the doctor. "Sorry." He reached over and pulled the zipper down exposing the body's face to the light that shone down from the lamp above the rear door.

"Young."

"Yes," the doctor said, shaking his head. "H. Lyle Worthington. Forty-two year-old white male. Suffered a stroke two weeks ago."

"That's all."

"No, I'm afraid not," said the doctor. "He would have been lucky if that were all. No, when he suffered his stroke he fell backward and struck his head on the concrete deck of the pool behind his house. The blow severed his spinal cord and he was unable to move anything from the neck down."

"Shit," the clerk said slowly, his eyes wide with a look that said, 'there but for the grace of God...'

"Then when he was in the hospital they found out he was HIV positive."

"Jesus."

"He didn't have any money or health insurance so they moved him to a teaching hospital where he was pricked, probed and prodded by dozens of medical students and interns."

"Ouch."

"Well, it could have been worse," said the doctor. "I mean, he was paralyzed so he really didn't feel any pain."

The clerk's body shuddered. "Right."

"It was just too bad that he couldn't speak. It would have been very interesting to hear what he had to say for himself."

The clerk turned to look at the doctor, a curious expression on his face. "So if he couldn't speak, how did you know that he wanted an assisted suicide?"

"He could move his eyelids — one blink for yes, two blinks for no. He was asked if he wanted to go on living and... blink-blink."

"What have you got?" "Oh," said the doctor. "Sorry." He reached over and pulled the zipper down exposing the body's face to the light that shone down from the lamp above the rear door.

The clerk stared at the body, studying the eyes that were still open and gave the face a look of utter terror. "With no money or insurance, he must have been a real burden on his family."

"Oh, you have no idea."

The clerk began nodding slowly. "You did a good thing, then, helping this guy out."

"Yes, the family is much better off without him."

The doctor zipped up the bag and the two men wheeled the body inside.

☆ ☆ ☆

Later, after the doctor had moved the bagged body onto a sliding drawer, he took a quick look around and opened the bag for a final word with the deceased.

"You were dead wrong about one thing, Mr. Worthington. Your life was worth far more than half a million dollars. I thought so, and so did your mother."

☆

NEXT ISSUE:

Fiction by Andrew Salmon, Ron Baxley, Eric Roundtree and Robert Addison

A Story by
Richard Reeve

A short walk

It was one of those days that you imagine the summers were always like in your childhood memory and I was enjoying my morning stroll with Penny, an obstinate Yorkie bitch. Up near the hills Penny disappeared into a cave, more a crack than a cave, I suppose, but I could just about squeeze through if I had to. I spent a half an hour fruitlessly calling her and alternatively cursing her. Still cursing, I squeezed myself through the crack and saw a long corridor of a cave. What I hadn't realised was that Penny had squeezed past me and was back outside but I was still looking for the little bitch in the cave.

I walked on into the dim lit cave peering around for her. In the distance I could see a ring of light. I hoped that she hadn't gone right through, I'd never find her then. It took me ten minutes to get to it.

I looked out through the crack in the cave. It was raining, the dull drizzling rain that soaks you through and turns the ground to mud. I couldn't understand it, it had been a fine day when I had entered the cave at the other end.

I heard the din, a sound that I had never heard before, the dull hum, the clanking, then I recognised the snorting and whinnying of horses. They appeared out of the forest, a few men in armour on horses, followed by a hoard of ragged men. They were all very wet. The horses hooves and the men's shoes threw up clods of mud. The walking men carried longbows, some carried pikes and one, just one, carried a wet rag that I knew to be a flag of St. George.

As they came on and on out of the trees, I thought, what a bad day it was to be having a pageant. The wagons followed them, the heavy horses struggling with the wagons that seemed always to be threatening to stick in the ooze that was left after the men and horses had churned it up.

I had pulled back into the cave to watch the pageant past, it was ridiculous in this rain and so many of them, where could they have come from I wondered.

A horseman came from a different direction and I glimpsed the fleur–de–lis on his tabard. He rode to the man at the head of the column. They talked for a while then the rider turned and rode away in the direction from which he had come.

It was growing dark, darker than usual because of the solid downpouring of steady rain. The column of wet and ragged men had stopped and were making camp. Now I was confused, surely they did not intend to camp in the wet conditions. I stayed watching, fascinated as the column closed up into a mass and fires began to be lit. It seemed that some men were using tents but the majority of the men settled down in the rain that only drizzled now. It was a miserable scene and the men shuffled about in the mud going from fire to fire, some in ragged garb, some still in their armour.

I couldn't leave, I was captivated by the scene, I was attracted to the group but only if it was a pageant of some kind. After watching the scene I was having the horrible feeling that this was the real thing, a medieval English army. When the messenger wearing the Fleur–de–lis came galloping up again and talked with the English leader I knew what was happening but how I don't know.

This was France and just over there was the village they called Agincourt. The joker chatting to the Frenchman was no other than Henry the Fifth. In the morning there would be a battle and the English would win, all that was left was the slaughter, the blood and bone shattered by cold steel, beautiful horses brought down by arrows not much thicker than the hay they knew. Men that knew best the plough cut down for ambitions sake and the nobility of France laid low, humbled by a handful of sick and ragged English yeoman. There would be the stench of blood that stayed in the nostrils for hours and in the imagination for days. Not an enlightening sight, I turned back into the cave, it would happen anyway, it had already in the past. After all, it was how England became a power in the world.

I walked back through the cave and found Penny sitting outside waiting for me.

☆

Shortly after submitting this story to Parsec, Richard Reeve suddenly took ill. While he was in hospital, he received our acceptance letter, according to his wife Amaryllys, he was happy to see that his story had struck a chord. Richard passed away in October 1999. As Amaryllys put it in a note to us, his writing will ensure that Richard will not be forgotten. — ed.

An escape into the woods takes a man farther than he bargained

New Avalon

A story by
Christopher Cowper

Goin' down by Avalon
Oh my Avalon of the heart
Goin' down by Avalon
Gonna make a brand new start
- Van Morrison

The asphalt paving ended nearly seven miles ago. Now the abandoned, dusty logging road, cleared years ago to accommodate skidders and semis loaded with pulp, was disappearing. Moss and fern, tiny rock maple and golden birch seedlings encroached upon the last signs of civilization. The occasional rejected poplar, half-way between soft and hardwood, rose in the solitude created by clear-cutting. In all directions sprouted alder bushes; behind these the seemingly endless forest.

"You will take medication for the rest of your life, Artie. Mental illness alters a person's life irrevocably. With proper drug treatment, however, you can expect some degree of normalcy."

"Thanks, doctor."

"My secretary will see that you are followed by the Mental Health Clinic in Moncton. She will call with a scheduled appointment in five months — there's quite a backlog." Apparently.

Artie shrugged his camping gear higher onto his shoulders, and tightened the straps. If the road remained visible and the weather held he would reach New Avalon before dark. About mid-afternoon, his long stride brought him to the area of New Ireland, the only remains of the once thriving farming community a crumbling graveyard. Compass in hand, he set out in a northerly direction for New Avalon. One of the first settlements in New Brunswick, now nothing of New Avalon — no graveyard, dilapidated wooden fences, or stone cellar shell — remained. It was useless to speculate what had happened; countless such sites lay scattered about New Brunswick.

Artie had chosen the location carefully. Well north of Fundy Park, south of Caledonia Mountain, and west of the now unused Dobson Trail, New Avalon would be completely free of people. And the name New Avalon conjured up pleasant childhood memories. At Riverside Consolidated School the Grade 4 teacher introduced her class to the Arthurian legend, and Artie was bitten. He and his brother had spent a summer jousting and tilting with makeshift broom-handle lances, a neighbouring farm's ponies their steeds.

By sundown, having successfully traversed increasingly dense foliage and rough terrain, he was in the general area. Under a rising gibbous moon he selected a patch of forest floor that appeared suitable for a campsite. Nearby wound a lolling stream, and plenty of deadwood for burning lay scattered about. After gathering a supply he lighted a small fire, and spent his first night in the hills of Albert County staring into the flames.

"Sorry, Artie. As your case manager, I have to advise against such employment. Wanting to work is commendable, but think of the pressure you'll face, returning to the computer room! You would have to cope with a lot of different people, and, besides, computers are... well, logical. But there is a UI program devised for those with schizophrenia, and I'm sure you'll fit right in. They offer 20-week courses in Building Maintenance or Short Order Cooking. I've arranged an appointment for you with someone at the Centre, and we'll go from there."

Great. Cleaning toilets or dunking pre-cut fries in hot oil.

Artie spent the better part of his first day in the woods

drenched to the skin in weltering rain, building a lean-to. In the afternoon, he paused from his labour long enough to catch two fish with line he had carried along and a make-shift rod. He cleaned the brook trout, placed them in a frying pan and rekindled his small fire. The forest air was soon fragrant with the aroma of simmering fresh fish. To go with the delicacy he brought out canned beans and perspiring cheese.

By nightfall his temporary shelter was complete, the area around it and down to the small brook relatively clear, and, this time, a proper fire roaring.

"Of course, the mentally ill rarely marry. Close relationships, relationships of any kind, do not come easily. As well, the suicide rate is high among those with your illness; but most such cases can be attributed to non-compliance with drug therapy. Whatever you do, Artie, take your medication." Leaning back in his reclining armchair, the Restigouche Hospital psychiatrist smiled. "I say this to prepare you for what lies ahead."

As Artie drifted into sleep beneath a sky ablaze with uncountable stars, his thoughts were of his brother — Artie's only family. He had died in a car accident one month before Artie's retreat. The sharp turn in the road just before their house on the outskirts of Riverside-Albert was infamous for fatal car collisions.

Over the years, more than one resident of the village had met a gruesome end there. Now the only home Artie had known was up for sale, the proceeds to help toward family debts. He faced a permanent move to Moncton, a slim federal disability pension, rip-off boarding houses, and soup kitchens. When the full brunt of this hit Artie he decided to beat this thing in his own way.

Artie woke relatively dry, thanks to the shelter of the nine-branch lean-to and the worst of the shower having spent itself. Out from cover, though, big droplets of rainwater still fell from the branches above. After pulling on his boots he stretched aching muscles and worked the spot on his back where

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overnight a root had slowly dug in.

"Third day, no medication," he thought. He expected withdrawals from the drug he had faithfully taken since it all began, some two years before. But felling trees for a log cabin, beholding stars in a crystal clear sky, and having raccoons and porcupines as his sole neighbours had to have some healing effect.

Today, Artie would set one or two dozen snares and put together his new deer rifle. He turned to take in the sight of the nearby babbling brook ... And stopped short.

An old man was sitting atop a boulder on the other side of the stream, calmly puffing on a curiously-wrought pipe. He smiled in Artie's direction and raised a hand in greeting. Worn and patched coveralls covered a slight paunch and cardigan shirt. On the old man's feet were a pair of high boots, and on his head a nondescript hat, so battered Artie doubted it kept out much rain. He had wrinkled, browned skin, and sported a tough, grey beard. It was impossible to say how old he might be.

Dumbfounded, Artie vainly tried to recall where he had lain his leather-sheathed hunting knife the evening before. Another human in the middle of the forest, especially in November, was the last thing he had expected.

Chuckling, the old man raised in his left hand an alder branch, five large speckled trout fastened to it through their gills. "You'll need yer knife to clean these. If you're not afraid t'eat with a fellow so old he can barely get his boots on, that is?"

Artie chastised himself for being afraid, and took the proffered fish after the old man sprightly jumped protruding stones and boulders to Artie's side of the brook. He appeared harmless enough. In fact, his affable laugh and ready smile Artie found strangely reassuring. Locating the knife, Artie set about cleaning the trout — chopping off heads, slitting abdomens, and removing guts. The job was complete in a few minutes. The old man seemed content to smoke his pipe, so Artie began to scrounge about for suitable firewood. Mentally he noted that more dead tree limbs would need to be one of the day's priorities.

From where had the old man come? Artie had chosen the New Avalon site specifically for its lack of inhabitants. A hunter? No. Miles from even four-wheel drive territory, a sportsman could never hope to remove a kill.

Had someone alerted the Forest Rangers about his retreat? Was the government that concerned about squatters? Artie shook his head to chase away the thought. It would take subtler symptoms of paranoia to force abandonment of his resolution.

"Don't get many campers," the old man remarked, as Artie tried unsuccessfully to light rain-damp wood. "Let me help." Artie's guest rose from his perch on a fallen white spruce and moved to the unlit fire, his back turned. In a moment — How did he do that? — a good fire was blazing. Artie threw the trout fillets into his frying pan, and began cooking.

"What brings a young fellow like you to such a remote area?" The old man filled his pipe bowl with more tobacco from a leather pouch. "Oh, almost forgot. I brought some hellebore for the fish."

From a second pouch, this one attached to his belt, the old-timer withdrew some dried leaves and handed the herb to Artie. "Brings out the taste." As Artie crushed the leaves and sprinkled them into the pan his visitor continued. "Not lost, are you?"

Lost? Artie considered speaking of the loss of his only family, his vocation — hope! — but, as was his way, kept quiet. This seemed to suit the old man, and they ate the rest of breakfast in silence. Artie picked the conversation up as he moved to boil water for King Cole tea and dish water.

The worst possible scenario would be the eventual return of suicidal urgings. What he would do then he did not know. Perhaps, play the role of just another lost hunter; a decomposing, half-eaten corpse stumbled across in early spring by some wandering hiker.

"You... live here?" Artie needed to know. An answer in the affirmative could mean a quick end to his plan.

"Have been, yes. For some time. But I'll be going soon." Artie let slip an audible sigh of relief. "The cold is coming, and... I've other concerns."

What did that mean? "My camp's due east, about a half hour's walk along the stream bed. Join me for breakfast tomorrow." And with that, still unintroduced, the old man bounded to his feet and melted into the forest. From a distance Artie heard a parting call: "And this time you can bring the trout!"

The old man was certainly touched. As Artie set about the morning's work of making his chosen site more habitable - clearing and burning underbrush, felling the balsam fir and red spruce that stood in the way of a future cabin — he couldn't help smile at the rather incongruous character.

"And aren't I supposed to be crazy, too?" Artie thought. Maybe he would make his way to the eccentric's campsite the next day.

Setting snares was more difficult than he had imagined. With no snow fallen, one had to go by droppings to determine where the snowshoe hares were running and the task was not easy for a novice. Artie had the premonition he would be eating a lot of trout in the near future. Looking around at the still rich vegetation growing everywhere, he couldn't help being envious of the herb and woodlore he suspected his unexpected visitor commanded.

In a rush it came to Artie that the old man might be the last human he would ever see. Artie had known all along his retreat was drastic, even desperate; but, to lose one's self in a New Brunswick forest, perhaps never returning to humankind ...

He found himself wishing the old man did not intend to leave at the coming of colder weather.

That afternoon, half-naked and sweating despite a chill in the air, Artie took a break from clearing land and set about securing a catch for supper and the next morning's breakfast. An hour later, separating the six largest for himself and the old man, and cleaning the three he would eat now, a movement on the periphery of his vision caught his eye.

It was only a bird. A hawk, in fact. Intrigued at the relatively rare sight, he tried to identify the species. A red-tail? Broad-wing? No, the feathers were too multi-coloured. Artie concluded it was of a variety he had not encountered previously — which was puzzling. While majoring in computer science at UNB he had studied Ornithology as an aside, and thought he knew of every hawk species found in the northeastern forests.

The next morning, Artie woke early, shaking from the cold and from returning nerve-wracked energy. The absence of medication was beginning to take effect. But he had prepared himself, and re-affirmed inwardly his determination to stay, no matter the suffering, as the weeks grew colder and the forest floor began to pile up with snow.

The worst possible scenario would be the eventual return of suicidal urgings. What he would do then he did not know. Perhaps, play the role of just another lost hunter; a decomposing, half-eaten corpse stumbled across in early spring by some wandering hiker.

Setting booted feet in chilly, gurgling water to make his way upstream and visit the old man he spied another hawk — or was it the same one? — gliding just above tree level. The graceful bird seemed content to traverse the same route as Artie until about half-way there, then vanished.

Just at that moment the first sun rays to crest the surrounding treetops and fall to the brook momentarily blinded Artie. Raising his hand to shield his eyes, Artie had a strange sense that something was wrong, but could not put his finger on it.

Then he stopped short, collapsing to a sitting position on a large rock mid-stream. Unbelieving, after the first shocked minute he snatched out his compass, but the needle only verified what couldn't be happening.

The morning sun was rising in the west.

By the time Artie neared the old man's cabin he had decided not to discuss time's reversal — if that's what it was. Probably, Artie thought, the recluse was experiencing nothing unusual.

"Right on time!"

Today the old man was wearing a coarse, woolen tunic fastened with string, and antiquated, no, ancient, boots. "See you've brought some fish. Good. Here take this."

Artie accepted a wooden bowl of salad, composed mostly of the same herb mixed with the previous day's trout. "I'll do the cooking this time. And mind you eat all that's in the bowl!"

"What is this?"

"Roasted acorn, from Northern Red Oak, select mushrooms, and hellebore herb. Very good for you. In my day, they said hellebore remedied everything from toothache to dementia." Did Artie detect a stress in his host's voice on that last word? No. Impossible. Synchronicity, just synchronicity.

The old man smiled in Artie's direction, and presented some fried fish on a wooden plate. "Have some trout, Arthur."

Artie jumped to his feet and immediately began running as fast as he could manage down the stream bed. He did not stop until, soaked through from the splashing of long strides and one headlong fall into the icy water, he reached his campsite.

He had never revealed his name to the old man.

His loosened mind envisaged a ghostly, demonic, personified mental illness pursuing him into the woods, to his campsite, and probably all the way to the grave.

You conform to the system, including taking mind-numbing medication; or stop treatment, and go crazy. Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

He had to get the hell away from here.

And the more foolish aspects of his plan began to occur to Artie. Temperatures in southern New Brunswick during winter months often plummeted to -30 degrees Celsius with the wind

chill. With a growing coyote population, game could be scarce. Not to mention that ammunition - and his rifle, too — could only last so long. And what if he were injured? Or became seriously sick?

More and more Artie realized survival entailed return to, or at least connection with, civilization.

But there was no place for him there.

The only real solution to the whole dilemma Artie finally embraced. And, as he bowed to the inevitable, a deep peace suffused his being with final calm.

Artie rose to his feet, pocketed his orienteering compass, and began walking in an easterly direction. The rest of his gear he left to the elements. He could reach Cape Enrage, the incongruous spur of rock jutting out into Chignecto Bay, in one day. The automated lighthouse, ever-present winds, and constantly rolling waters would be the only witnesses.

A few hours after leaving New Avalon he reached the area of New Ireland. But there was no sign of the settlement. Neither was there any sign of the overgrown road by which he had so recently penetrated into the heart of Albert County.

By now Artie was prepared to believe anything.

Using his compass, he doggedly continued east-south-east, walking though the night, through verifying direction by starlight was difficult. Many constellations had strangely shifted course, or reconfigured.

In the darkness animals moved furtively, setting hair on end.

The morning sun rose in the east. Apparently, time had resumed its forward course. Birds chirped, flitting from branch to branch, and a lone coyote welcomed the bright orb with its unique lament. Artie spotted the rare variety of hawk again, wheeling high above.

He would reach his destination in only a few hours. Tear finally began to flow.

By afternoon only one high hill lay between Artie and the solid rock out-cropping of Cape Enrage. The roar of the crashing waves was thunderous. Intent on his goal, Artie reached the summit in a matter of moments. To be brought up short once again by an unbelievable phenomenon.

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Artie rose to his feet, pocketed his orienteering compass, and began walking in an easterly direction. The rest of his gear he left to the elements. He could reach Cape Enrage, the incongruous spur of rock jutting out into Chignecto Bay, in one day.

Gone were the lighthouse and outbuildings. In their place rose a medieval castle high above the pounding waves, looking for all the world as if it had always been there. Beached on the stony shore of the waters below lay two longboats, red and white sails furled. Their crews, some leather-clad, some wearing crude armour, spread across the escarpment in small groups, or circled huge, smoking fires of driftwood. Mist blowing in from the sea gave the entire scene a sense of unreality.

A low, unrelenting moan escaped Artie's lips. He would not even be permitted the death he felt was his.

The curious hawk — Artie felt certain it had been the same bird all through this ill-fated venture — perched on a block of stone not 10 feet from Artie. The bird settled a penetrating gaze on Artie's dumbfounded face, and began to talk.

"Your brother is down there. The one stamping his boots before the second fire. And... "

"No! This is going too far!" yelled Artie. He would not converse with a bird that should not even be in these forests! Castles and armed barbarians were not possible in New Brunswick!

He would have to try to find a doctor, fast. His medication would be doubled, even tripled, for sure. And a stay in the provincial mental hospital was unavoidable.

Artie began to back down the hill. Before him, the hawk was shape-shifting into the form of a bespectacled, somewhat distracted looking, wizard. T.H. White's cliches hit close to the mark.

"Not afraid of an old man, are you?" It was the voice of the old-timer Artie had met in the woods.

Then the old man stooped, muttered a quick chant, and rose, sweeping his arm wide. "Look around, Arthur. Take a good look."

With seemingly new-found vision Artie saw adventuring men laughing and drinking round open fires, a blustering sea beckoning, unlimited horizons. He saw knights jousting on real steeds, then kneeling before their ladies. He saw the fabled Excalibur, and, on the edge of his vision, the Grail.

He saw no downtown skid-row areas, no soup kitchen line-ups, no doctors dispensing pills.

He saw his brother calling.

Merlin led a weeping Arthur down the steep cliff, away from a world that can no longer hear knights, kings, and wizards.

☆

charles de lint

Displacement, alienation at heart of latest fantasy novel

By Chris Krejlgaard

Parsec photo

In his latest novel, Forests of the Heart, Charles de Lint offers a less-than-romatic take on Celtic folklore.

For more than a decade and almost two dozen books, Charles de Lint has refined the boundaries of his domain. During his career as a novelist, he has excelled at blending the world of fairies and other mythological beings with the world of cities and people.

His latest is no exception.

"My books are about character growth and creativity, this one has the added texture of the storm and the questions about home."

De Lint's latest novel, Forests of the Heart, is about displacement, of people trying to find a place in the world.

"The idea of home and what home is and where home is," de Lint explained recently. "These spirits from the Old World come over and try to take over from the New World spirits."

The novel also refers to an ice storm (ála the one that ripped through eastern Ontario and Quebec a few years back), as well as characters with a decidedly American southwest influence.

The latter aspect of the novel has its roots in de Lint's affection for the American southwest.

"We (de Lint and his wife, MaryAnn) love the desert, we love the southwest, you have to go there to understand how unbelievable it is. It just fills you.

"I wanted to take a less-romantic take on the Irish with this novel and I wanted to explore the culture of the southwest."

Forests of the Heart is set in Newford, as well as in Tucson, Az., and the spirit-world.

Its story deals with Latin American healers, displaced Irish genius loci, winter, creativity and other seemingly unrelated elements. Even though the main characters will be new to readers, de Lint does manage to weave characters from previous works into his upcoming novel.

"There was a bunch of different things that I wanted to put together," de Lint said of the seemingly disparate parts.

"I had written books with Celtic elements before and I wanted to write something from a less-romantic style. I

guess I had gotten tired of all those Celtic anthologies that had come out, the albums that were just like Celtic mood music."

In Forests of the Heart, the Gentry — dangerous ancient spirits — followed Irish immigrants to North America. Once there, the Gentry discovered that there were already spirits, the Manitou inhabiting the land. So they remain homeless. Wandering the city streets, the gather in the shadows and plot to regain their past glory.

Some people can see them and to those people they look fierce and dressed in black.

Bettina, who is part Indian, part Mexican, understands the spirit world and is one of those who can see the Gentry. Even though she manages to avoid them, one does manage to take her hand and lead her toward the spirit world.

In writing his novels, de Lint begins with a basic idea of where he wants the story to go, but for the most part, he approaches the exercise as a reader would approach his novel — he allows the story to take shape as he proceeds.

"I'm like a reader, if I know how the story is going to turn out, then I lose interest."

Then, he turns his attention to developing the characters.

"I'm very character- and story-oriented. The first thing I come up with is characters and then I really make sure it has a great storyline, or at least, an interesting story.

"I also like to read stories with asides and subplots. I like to have a lot of things going on to keep the reader busy."

Forests of the Heart was released in June. Later this year, Subterranean Press will be releasing Triskell Tales: 22 Years of Chapbooks.

The book is a collection of short stories that de Lint wrote for his wife, MaryAnn. Each Christmas, he would write a story and publish it in chapbook form through his Triskell Press imprint. After the first few years, de Lint began to give copies to friends and family members.

Besides offering the stories to readers for the first time, Triskell Tales also includes a full-colour painting for the cover and several black-and-white illustrations by Mary Ann.

The collection also offers readers an opportunity to see de Lint's growth as an author during the past two-plus decades.

"Readers, if they can make their way through the stories will be able to get a strong linear sense of my development as a writer," de Lint said. ☆

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Author strives to spark love of fantasy

Alison Baird laments the loss of wonder in fantasy stories geared to a younger reader

In her fantasy novels, Alison Baird tries to foster the same love of the fantastic among her young readers as she had growing up.

"I was raised on children's classics like Peter Pan, Wind in the Willows and Alice in Wonderland. I developed a taste for fantasy when I was very young" Baird recalled. "That's why I think it's important that children's fantasy and science fiction get a little more emphasis and attention than they do now."

Another problem, Baird says, is that as adult fantasies have become more popular, the plots have become more formulaic.

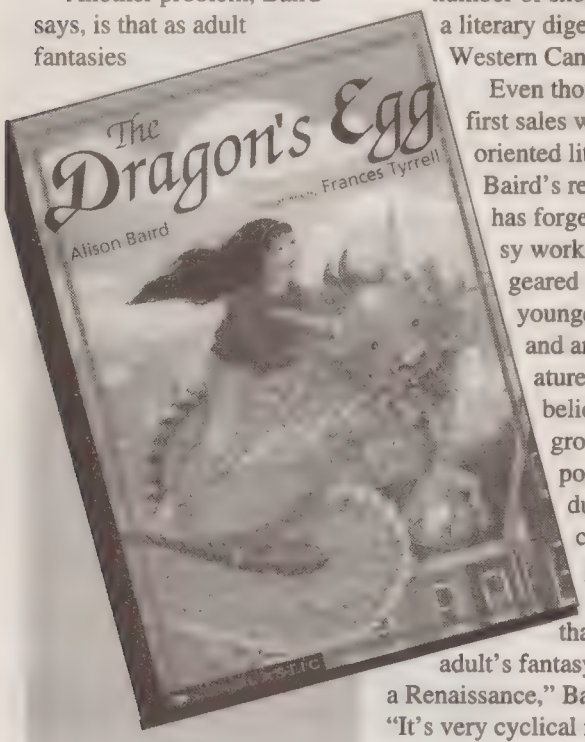
"It's turning into a genre like westerns or thrillers where you get your standard plot elements," she said. "Most disturbing of all is that I don't get any sense of wonder or enchantment which I really got from children's fantasies."

Like many writers, Baird can't remember a time when she didn't want to be a writer.

Her first sale came as a 12-year-old when she sold a poem to an anthology of children's poetry.

"I just kept at it until I made professional sales," Baird recalled.

And the sales came in the early '90s when she sold a number of short stories to a literary digest in Western Canada.



Even though her first sales were adult-oriented literature, Baird's reputation has forged in fantasy works that's geared toward younger readers and area of literature which she believes will be growing in popularity during the coming years.

"I feel that young adult's fantasy is having a Renaissance," Baird said. "It's very cyclical in nature and we're entering another phase and it's very exciting.

"There's a new appreciation for it."

Baird pointed out that reviewers seem amazed that adults read novels and stories geared to younger readers.

"The fact is they've been doing it for years," Baird explains. "It's interesting to consider what the adults are getting out of it.

"They're finding things in the books that children wouldn't."

The Oakville, Ont., author's first piece of fan mail was from a mother who had bought Dragon's Egg for her daughter and ended up reading it herself.

"Another mother cried at the ending, but it wasn't a particularly sad ending, but she was relating her own experiences to the story."

The Dragon's Egg concerns a Chinese girl who lives in Toronto's Chinatown.

Her father returns from a trip with a stone from the banks of the Yantzee River. The stone turns out to be an egg. The egg hatches and the girl becomes friends with the dragon.

Since her breakthrough with the Dragon's Egg in 1994, Baird has uncorked a series of novels which have captured the fancy of fantasy readers of all ages.

Her second novel, Hidden World which dealt with Celtic mythology, was originally conceived as a young adults novel. But during the course of writing the work, Baird began inserting words and passages which were more appropriate for adult readers.

Her third novel, White as the Wave, started out as a

Continued on page 57

Parsec photo

One reader of Baird's The Dragon's Egg cried at the ending of the book — not that the ending was sad, rather the woman was relating her own experiences to the story.

10 questions

Author reopens the universal debate

with robert j. sawyer

Even though he made his first professional sale more than 20 years ago, it is only during the '90s that Robert J. Sawyer has emerged as one the major voices among Canadian science fiction authors. His latest novel, Calculating God, has just hit bookshelves and already it's gained a favourable buzz.

Here, Sawyer talks about the novel, his writing and the state of modern science fiction.

What was the seed for Calculating God?

1 There's a lot of intriguing, but not conclusive, scientific evidence that we live in a universe that was carefully designed by a creator. The universe's fundamental parameters — and 'Parameters' was the working title for this novel — do seem to be fine-tuned to an almost infinite degree so that complex atoms, stars, galaxies, and life would be possible.

To give just one example, if the force of gravity were slightly weaker, hydrogen clouds would never coalesce to form stars; if it were slightly stronger, the universe would have collapsed down in a big crunch billions of years ago. Well, it seems to me that intelligent, rational people should be able to explore the issue of whether or not the universe shows signs of intelligent design without invoking religious mythology.

In a way, it's like the debate about whether life exists elsewhere in the universe: it 'is' possible to explore that without it devolving into a discussion of UFOs, which are the mythology of our time. Surely we can also discuss whether the universe has a creator without bringing Mount Sinai into the discussion.

When you began working on the novel, what did you want to accomplish?

2 I wanted people to look anew at a question they thought they'd already made up their minds about. I like to think I did that for the abortion issue in my Nebula Award winner, 'The Terminal Experiment,' and here I do it for the question of ultimate origins. Additionally, I wanted to hit evolutionists — and I count myself as one — upside the head: the current siege mentality against the creationists has led otherwise good scientists to throw up a brick wall when evolution is discussed.

They don't allow for any holes in the theory, but, of course, there 'are' holes in it, just as there are in any theory. It's bad science to deny problems with a theory, but evolutionists are running scared as school boards drop Darwinism from the curriculum, and so, for the supposedly greater good of getting evolution back into the classroom, they're denying that there are any things that still have to be worked out before we have a complete explanation of how one species changes into another.

How is the approach you've taken in Calculating God different than your earlier novels such as Factoring Humanity? Or is it a continuation of the approach?

3 Calculating God is told in the first person, something I've only done twice before, in the first two novels I wrote, End of an Era and Golden Fleece. It's also the most cerebral novel I've ever done — there's very little 'physical' action in it, although I think it moves at a very swift pace, and the perspective just keeps getting wider and wider. I'm enormously proud of Factoring Humanity, but it's a structurally complex book; Frameshift before it was even more complex in design.

For Calculating God, I made a deliberate choice to have a very simple, elegant structural design to underscore the apparently simple and elegant design some scientists are now perceiving in the structure of our universe.

What makes good science fiction?

4 First, it needs all the elements that make up good fiction: character, plot, subplot, theme. Next, I think it has to be 'relevant.' Science fiction isn't for the ages, it's a literature of the present. Mindless escapism is just that — mindless. Good SF lets us check our preconceptions at the door and really explore social issues with fresh eyes.

What do you think of the quality of speculative fiction being published, has it improved or declined since you began writing?

5 Oh, it's definitely gone up. My first short story sold in 1979; that's 21 years ago, before such writers as Greg Egan and William Gibson and Kim Stanley Robinson and Robert Charles Wilson and Octavia Butler had any impact on the field. There's no doubt that the best work being published today is better than the best work of two decades ago. The characterization in modern science fiction is richer, the science is more elaborate and more accurate, and the moral dimension is deeper.

The sad irony is that at time when SF writers are doing by far the best work ever done in this field, sales are the worst they've ever been.

How do you think your writing has changed over the course of 12 novels and a bunch of short stories?

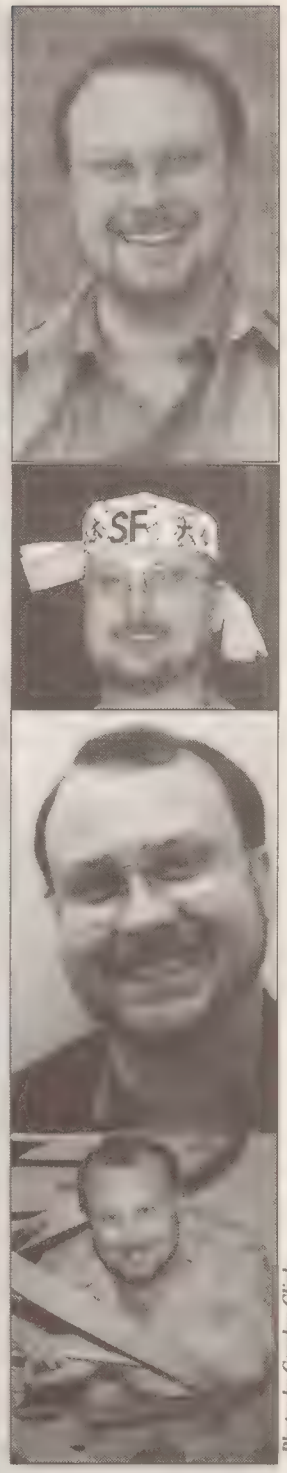
6 I've always written clean prose — probably a holdover from my days as a freelance journalist — but I used to try to tart it up a bit more when I was doing fiction. If anything, my language is even more pellucid and simple now; I really think that there is great beauty in clarity. The biggest change, though, is clearly that I've come down to Earth. Five of my first six published novels were set off Earth, or involved aliens and space travel.

All of my most recent six have been set on Earth in the near future or, even better, in the present day (as Frameshift, Illegal Alien, and Calculating God are). I'm still fascinated by outer space, but I'm even more fascinated by what Judy Merril used to call inner space, and that's what I'm exploring now.

As for short fiction, it was a real struggle for me to master that form, but I think the stories I've written in the last year are the best I've ever done. A number of people have said to me that my The Shoulders of Giants, the lead story in the just-published anthology Star Colonies, should win the Hugo Award. That's extraordinarily gratifying to hear, and is something I never thought anyone would say about my short stories when my first one was published 20 years ago.

You mention Judy Merril, how much influence did she have on your work?

7 I was very fond of Judy, and cherished our friendship, but, in fact, she had no influence at all on my work. For a time, she was writer-in-residence at the special SF library in Toronto, and I know she critiqued a lot of manuscripts there, helping such writers as Edo van Belkom get started. But I never participated in that program; I didn't even know about it at the time. If I had a mentor at the beginning, it was Toronto soft-SF writer Terence M. Green, not Judy Merril. In the '80s, he



Photos by Carolyn Clink

"I won't be subjected to a Rushdie-style 'fatwah,' but I'm sure a lot of people will disapprove of my book."

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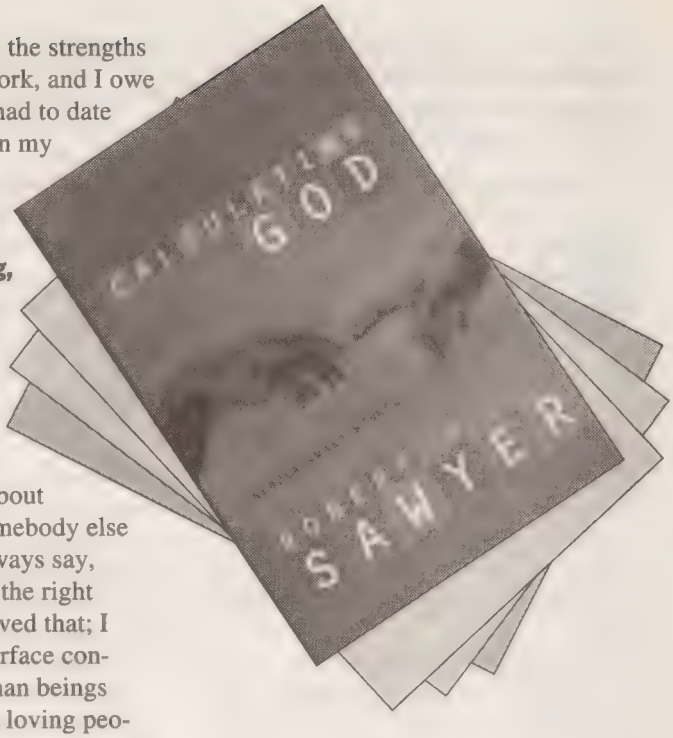
really opened my eyes to the strengths and weaknesses in my work, and I owe a lot of the success I've had to date to his taking an interest in my writing back then.



In what directions do you see your writing going, philosophically or thematically, in the coming years?

8 It used to be that when people would complain to me about something somebody else had done, I'd always say, 'Yeah, but his heart is in the right place.' And I really believed that; I really thought, despite surface conflicts, that almost all human beings were decent, honourable, loving people. I suppose I was naive to be able to hold onto that worldview well into my thirties, but some of the crap I've personally encountered and some of the stuff that's been perpetrated on others I know in the last few years has awoken me to the fact that a lot of people are at best amoral and at worst downright immoral. As an evolutionist the question that most fascinates me right now is, did it have to turn out this way? Will survival of the fittest and selfish genes drive all intelligent lifeforms into being the kind of mean S.O.B.'s that we turned out to be, or could it have turned out more pleasantly?

That's what I'll be exploring in my next few books.

Do you have any concerns when you tackle such daunting issues as the existence of god?

9 Oh, for sure. There's a topic devoted to my work on CompuServe (GO SAWYER will take you there). As we do this interview, Calculating God has only been out for a week, and already my topic has been co-opted by creationists. On the flipside, a fanatical evolutionist, who keeps talking about Carl Sagan as if he were Jesus, keeps berating me in e-mail. I won't be subjected to a Rushdie-style 'fatwah,' but I'm sure a lot of people will disapprove of my book. But that's nothing new; I have a thick file folder stuffed with letters I've received from angry lunatics over the years. It goes with the territory — and, of course, I do make it easy for people to get hold of me, through my website at **www.sfwriter.com**.

Still, I'd much rather provoke a strong reaction in people, than be bland and ignored.

Is there a god?

10 I was on Canada A.M., talking about Calculating God. The researcher who did the pre-interview said to me, "I can't tell from reading this book where you stand on the central issue."

And I said, 'That's right.' I really took pains not to preach — so to speak — with this book. But if you're asking my personal opinion, well, no, I don't believe the Judeo-Christian personal God exists.

As to whether the universe was intelligently designed, I honestly don't know — and neither does anyone else. We just don't have enough data yet to answer that question. But someday, I'm convinced, we will — and that's what I explore in Calculating God.

☆

Continued from page 53

novel for adults. But Baird suggested that it could be marketed to young adults because of their interest in ecology. Since its release, the book has been placed on a recommended list for children.

"So you see, there isn't any one age group (reading the books)," Baird explained. "It pays to be a little more flexible, because then you can get all kinds of markets."

White as the Wave retells Herman Melville's Moby Dick from the whale's perspective.

"I got the idea from reading Moby Dick," Baird explained. "I thought Meville was just starting to touch on the whale's side of the story.

"There are some parts of the story where he didn't describe the whale as a metaphor, but as a living breathing creature. The story was already there, I just had to bring it together and add the details."

"Most disturbing of all is that I don't get any sense of wonder or the enchantment which I really got from children's fantasies."

Next up, Baird will likely tackle a sequel to Hidden World, although she points out there's a number of manuscripts which she'd like to polish up and complete. ☆

Upcoming Releases

The following are books are scheduled for release by U.S. publishers or their Canadian distributors since the previous issue of the magazine was distributed. Please note that release dates are subject to change. HC denotes hard cover, TP denotes trade paperback.

August

Banks, Iain M.	Look to Windward	(Little Brown/Orbit, hc)
Baxter, Stephen	Space: Manifold II •	(HarperCollins/Voyager, hc)
Crowley, John	Daemonomania	(Bantam, hc)
Datlow, Ellen, & Terri Windling, eds.	The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror:	(St. Martin's Griffin/HB Fenn anth, hc/tpb)
Gentle, Mary	The Book of Ash #3:	(HarperCollins/Eos)
Goodkind, Terry	Faith of the Fallen	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)
Goodkind, Terry	Faith of the Fallen	(Orion/Gollancz, hc)
Greenberg, Martin H., ed.	My Favorite Fantasy Story	(DAW,)
Hobb, Robin	Ship of Destiny	(Bantam Spectra, hc)
Jeter, K.W.	Bladerunner 4:	(Orion/Gollancz, hc)
MacLeod, Ken	The Sky Road	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)
McCarthy, Wil	The Collapsium	(Ballantine Del Rey, hc)
McMullen, Sean	The Miocene Arrow	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)
Reed, Robert	Marrow	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)
Slonczewski, Joan	Brain Plague	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)
Turtledove, Harry	The Great War: Breakthroughs	(Ballantine Del Rey, hc)
Wilson, Robert Charles	The Perseids and Other Stories	(Tor/HB Fenn, cln, hc)
Wolfe, Gene	In Green's Jungles	(Tor/HB Fenn, hc)

September

Ballard, J.G.	Super-Cannes	(HarperCollins, hc)
Brooks, Terry	Ilse Witch	(Ballantine Del Rey, hc)
Clement, Hal	The Essential Hal Clement, Volume 3: Variations on a Theme by Sir Isaac Newton	(NESFA Press, cln, hc)
Elliott, Kate	Child of Flame	(Little Brown/Orbit, tpb)
Feist, Raymond E.	Krondor: Tear of the Gods	(HarperCollins, hc)
Herbert, Brian, Kevin J. Anderson	House Harkonnen	(Hodder & Stoughton, hc/tpb)
Jacques, Brian	Lord Brocktree	(Hutchinson, hc)
Le Guin, Ursula K.	The Telling	(Harcourt, hc)
Marley, Louise	The Glass Harmonica	(Ace, tpb)
McAuley, Paul J.	Shrine of Stars	(HarperCollins/Eos, hc)
McKenna, Juliet E.	The Swordsman's Oath	(HarperCollins/Eos)
Morrill, Rowena	The Art of Rowena Morrill	(Paper Tiger, tpb)
Russell, Eric Frank	Major Ingredients	(NESFA Press, cln, hc)
Russo, Richard Paul	Terminal Visions	(Golden Gryphon Press, cln, hc)
Simmons, Dan	Darwin's Blade	(Morrow, hc)
Smith, Kristine	Rules of Conflict	(HarperCollins/Eos)
Smith, Michael Marshall	Only Forward	(Bantam Spectra)
Stevens-Arce, James	Soulsaver: A Fable of the Second Coming	(Harcourt, hc)
Williamson, Jack	The Collected Stories of Jack Williamson, Volume Three: Wizard's Isle	(Haffner Press, cln, hc)

Vonarburg: refining the 'big machine'

Recapturing the innocence of her early days as a writer allowed Quebec's top sci-fi author to complete a five-part saga 34 years after it began

Parsec photo

Elisabeth Vonarburg is an elloquent defender of science fiction as literature — although she concedes that "some is less well-written than others.

Science fiction in Quebec has a reputation for being more literary-based than elsewhere in North America.

Partly because of the language, Quebec science fiction fans have been buffered from the media-based science fiction that has washed over the genre during the past two decades.

Elisabeth Vonarburg is at the forefront of Quebec's science fiction community.

"I've never considered science fiction as less than literature," Vonarburg said. "Of course, some of it is less well-written than others."

Since the mid-80s, she has garnered six Aurora Awards for her short fiction and for her work as an editor.

She has published three short stories collections in French, (two in Quebec and one in France), as well as several more stories in various science fiction magazines in both English and French. A number of her stories have been published in such renowned publications as Amazing and Tomorrow in the United States.

She's also published a handful of novels, including the U.S. release, The Reluctant Voyagers.

Vonarburg discovered science fiction as a young girl growing up in her native France.

Where other authors found the genre through comic books when they were kids, Vonarburg discovered it through literature.

"It was a real a liberation," she said. "I had read extensively and had discovered a lot of authors and it was invigourating,

"There are two lines in my journal from which everything I have written since then."

From those two lines, she began constructing a world.

During the next two years, Vonarburg spent most of her time constructing this world and the characters that would inhabit it.

Love of the genre

While in university, work on the project became sporadic as Vonarburg refined the work and read voraciously.

"I was just at the right point in my personal life when I could take it all in. I read all types of science fiction."

As she read, she found herself attracted to the works of such female authors as Judith Merril, works which Vonarburg said "spoke to me."

She has tried to foster this same love of science fiction with others.

Vonarburg has taught literature at various universities in Quebec and led a number of science fiction writing workshops during a 10-year period.

Through her time in the classroom and working on stories, Vonarburg continued to write and refine what she came to call "the big machine."

By the mid-70s, the world which had begun in her journal 15 years earlier was reaching its limits. And friends were wondering if she could write anything else.

"It was a challenge," Vonarburg conceded.

So she began her career as a short story writer. After her career flourished on two continents.

But still "the big machine" was there.

Almost 34 years after she first began creating a new world in her journal, Vonarburg revisited the material and began preparing it for publication.

With the passage of more than three decades, Vonarburg's perceptions had markedly changed from those of a teenager.

"At one point, I was not innocent enough anymore to write some of the things that I wrote," she said. "When you begin writing, you do not know you cannot do something, but you do them and they work. But you don't know why."

But after so many years and so many experiences, that sense of innocence and awe was missing.

"It was difficult. I had to get back in touch with my lost innocence."

The result?

A five-book saga, Tyranaël.

In the coming months, Vonarburg will be working on a handful of projects, including a dark fantasy and an alternate universe where Christ has a twin sister who becomes a religious figure and Paul dies on the road to Damascus.

☆

Long process ends for Chapetier

When Tor published the translation of La taupe et le dragon, years of effort finally came to fruition

Joel Champetier sits atop the ranks of Quebec's speculative fiction authors.

His first novel, Dragon's Eye, has been translated into English to good reviews and respectable sales.

The novel, written almost 10 years ago, had been available only in French.

Published in 1991 as La taupe et le dragon, The Dragon's Eye is the story of a secret agent on another planet, New China, whose mission is to bring back a turncoat from deep in the territory of an unfriendly colonial settlement, or at least as much of him as possible.

"I want to give the reader the same pleasure that I had when I read science fiction."

The decision by Tor books of New York to publish the novel marked the end of a long process for Champetier.

"I had been trying to get the novel translated for years," he explained. "I asked Jean-Louis Trudel to translate the book for a percentage of the royalties."

Trudel, who is an accomplished author of young adult books, agreed. Normally, a translator makes an agreement with a publisher and Canada Council provides funding for the translation. But not in the case of The Dragon's Eye.

The original publisher had no interest in publishing a translation, so Champetier took back the rights to the book and was left to cover the costs as best he could, hence the offer of a percentage to Trudel.

"Jean-Louis had to have confidence in me to accept the deal," Champetier said. "If it had not been published, then he would have gotten nothing."

The sales for the English version of The Dragon's Eye have been so strong that Tor has signed for the translation of another of Champetier's novels.

This time the translation is being handled by another Quebec writer, Sheryl Curtis. The novel is a dark fantasy set in northern Quebec entitled La Mémoire du lac — the English version will carry the title, The Lake.

Champetier's recent breakthrough with English reading speculative fiction fans is just the latest success in his long writing career.

During almost 20 years, Champetier has gained a sizeable following thanks to his short stories and French-language novels. He made his first professional sale — translated title The Way to the Flower —to Solaris in 1982. The short story involved an autistic boy who could link telepathically with bees.

The story was the result of a contest at a writing workshop where participants had to pick three words from a hat and write a story based on those words.

The story won a Prix Boreal, Quebec's science fiction and fantasy awards, that year.

Since then, Champetier has become one of the leading French Canadian speculative fiction writers, the winner of the Prix Boreal and a handful of Aurora Awards. He won the Aurora for Survie sur Mars in 1989 and for La Mémoire du lac in 1995. His work as editor of Solaris, a French-language speculative fiction publication, netted him a third Aurora. Over the course of his writing career, Champetier has woven one thread through all of his works — his love of the fantastic.

"When you read a lot and you love science fiction and fantasy, it's normal that you would want to do the same thing," Champetier says. "I want to give the reader the same pleasure that I had when I read science fiction."

Getting these books proved a difficult task when he was growing up in Abitibi in northern Quebec.

"It wasn't that easy, you had to read what you could find," he said.

In his early teens, his family moved to Montreal and finding a good selection of reading material became infinitely easier.

During his early years, Champetier read translations of such science fiction pioneers as Phillip K. Dick and Van Vogt which were primarily published in France, as well as fantasy novels from Belgium — which Champetier points out, has a long tradition in publishing fantasy.

"In France, Van Vogt was as popular as Robert Heinlein was in the United States." he explained. "So we (Quebec readers) had a little different view of science fiction."

Despite his early affection for science fiction, Champetier has forged a career in writing fantasy and has no immediate plans to change gears.

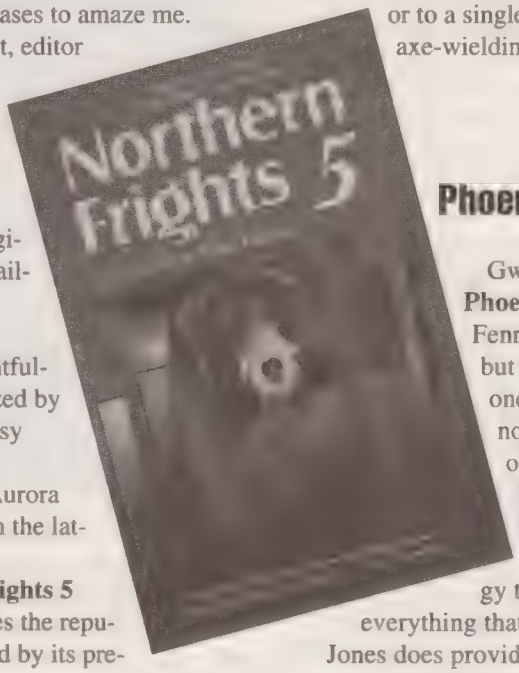
"I haven't written a science fiction novels for years," he said. "My last three novels were all fantasy. I will certainly do others. I just don't know when."

Northern Frights provides plenty of chills

The tradition continues...

In each of its incarnations Northern Frights never ceases to amaze me.

Each time out, editor Don Hutchinson manages to gather together the most compelling and imaginative works available.



Hutchinson's efforts have rightfully been recognized by the World Fantasy Awards and by Canada's own Aurora Award — it won the latter.

Northern Frights 5 handily continues the reputation established by its predecessors.

In its latest incarnation, Hutchinson has gathered together such notables as Nalo Hopkinson, Nancy Kilpatrick, David Nickle, Gemma Files and Robert Charles Wilson, as well as lesser-known (internationally) but highly talented authors as David Shtogryn and Carol Weekes.

Besides demonstrating the level of talent present in Canada, the result of such a blending is a broad range of styles and subject matters that leaves the reader anticipating the wonders found on the next page.

Of particular note is Hopkinson's entry, Slow Cold Chick.

Like her novels, Brown Girl in the Ring and Midnight Robber, Hopkinson embues her stories with a Caribbean flavour and sensibilities. To sum up the story would neither do it justice nor be fair to readers. Suffice to say, it is a creative effort that provides a distinct voice and perspective for a horror story.

Such efforts lie at the heart of Northern Frights success... to introduce new voices to a genre that too often is associated (thanks to movies) to monsters and axe-wielding lunatics or to a single author and his axe-wielding lunatic.

— Chris Krejgaard

Phoenix Cafe

Gwyneth Jones' **Phoenix Cafe** (Tor/HB Fenn) is an OK read, but this is definitely one novel that does not stand well on its own.

You must read the other two books in the trilogy to really understand everything that's going on.

Jones does provide some explanatory background passages but they cannot come even close to providing the depth needed to fully appreciate all the subplots woven throughout the story.

Jones deserves credit for coming up with a variation of the "alien invasion" story that I have never read before. After a couple centuries of benign interference in human affairs, the Aleutians are getting ready to reboard their world-ship and go home.

One of the sub-plots is how various segments of humankind react to the idea of being left on their own now that every living generation of human has grown up used to the aliens being present.

— Gregg Chamberlain

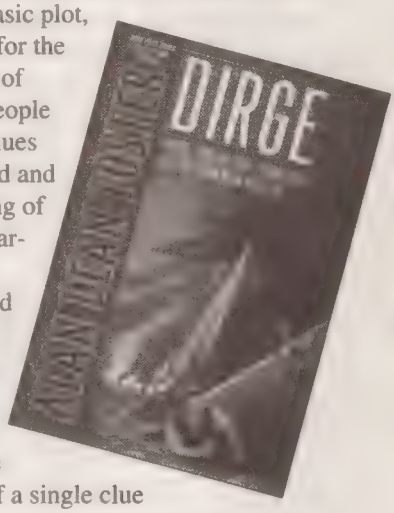
Dirge

Alan Dean Foster has written more than 20 novels set in the Humanx Commonwealth. With **Dirge** (Random House/DeRey) he continues the saga of how the Commonwealth was founded.

Phylogenesis, the first book of the current series, didn't bode well for the second installment. I thought the earlier book was a tad dry and uninspiring.

And Dirge has dry stretches too and the prospect of a space battle makes me weary — been there done that.

But Dirge is not irredeemably flawed. Foster's basic plot, searching for the murderers of 600,000 people (with no clues yet) is solid and the weaving of various characters (human and alien) into this plot is handled well.



But, the prospect of a single clue not only solving the murders of an entire settlement but also holding some significance for the various races is just too trite and commonplace — a deadly combination for any book, but particularly for a science fiction novel.

— Lars Johansen

In the Mood

Charles Grant: Who better to write a four-part series revolving around the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse than the writer of the first X-Files novels?

Keep one thing in mind. Whatever you might think Grant's Millennium Quartet is all about, it won't even come close to the reality. In the Mood (Tor/Forge), the second in the series is proof of that.

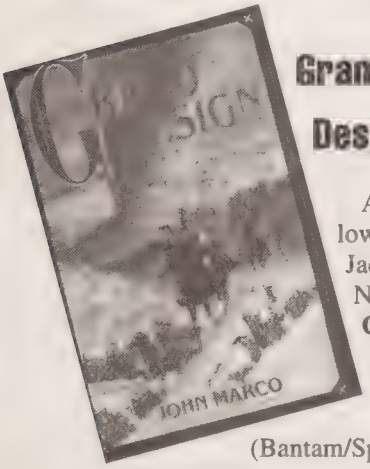
In The Mood is about famine.

Grant is not wasting 300-plus pages on mere physical hunger. He's interested in something much more serious. Spiritual hunger. Hunger of the soul.

The kind of hunger that haunts John

Bannock, makes him dream of flying, of crows with eyes of the same intense blue as his son.

— Gregg Chamberlain



Grand Design

As a followup to Jackal of Nar, **The Grand Design** (Bantam/Spectra) is wonderful.

Author John Marco presents a compelling addition to his earlier work and demonstrates the power of fantasy when it is written with conviction, clarity and imagination.

In this installment, Prince Richius Vantran has gone into exile, while Nar has fallen into civil war because of the death of the emperor.

The battle is being waged between religious fanatics and the followers of the Black Resistance.

Vantran is offered a chance at revenge and bringing peace back to the world by joining forces with a third group in the battle.

Of course, Vantran must avoid a trap that's been set for both him and his new allies.

Marco's handling of the intrigue between those aspiring to power and their various machinations is brilliant and well thought out.

This is one of the series which will actually have you counting the days to the next installment.

— Chris Krejgaard

Gilgamesh

Stephen Grundy's version of **Gilgamesh** (HarperCollins) is a welcome addition to this year's offerings of fantasy novels — if for no other reason than to show fans where it all began.

The epic story follows the trials of Gilgamesh a young warrior who pperfers battles to performing his duties as king of Erech.

When he spurns the gods by not taking part in a sacred ritual. To teach the warrior/king a lesson the gods create another warrior king who becomes Gilgamesh's friend and foe.

Enkidu takes his friend Gilgamesh on a quest which leads to his eventual destruction.

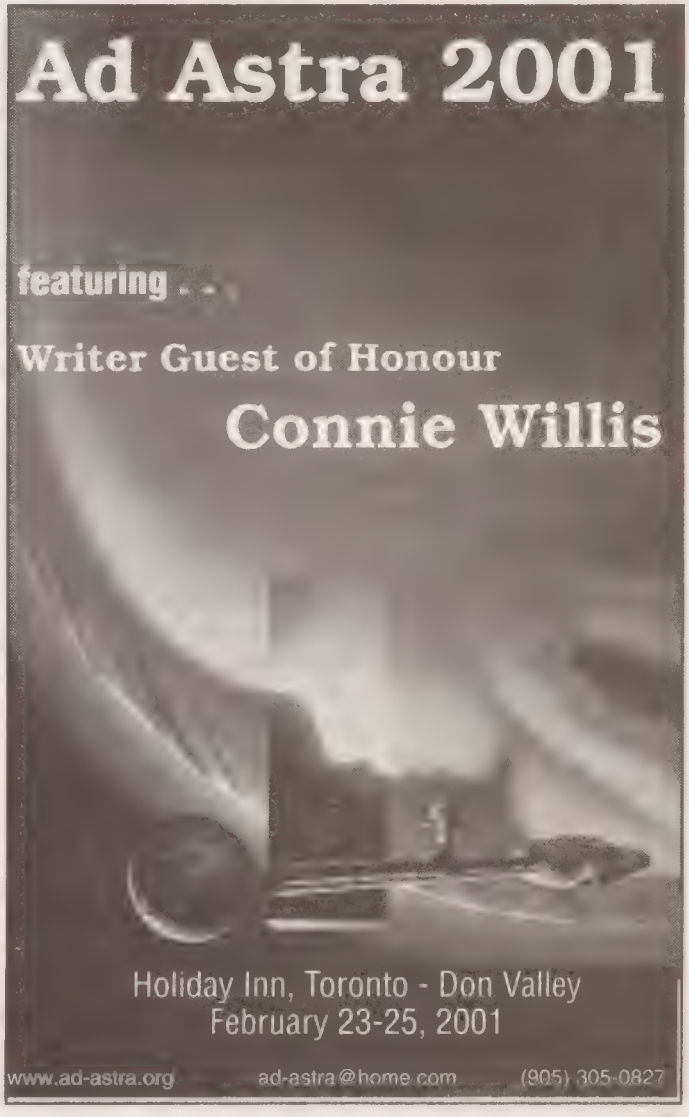
This is the story which remains the benchmark for all epic fantasies and the inspiration for many fantasy novelists.

— Chris Krejgaard

JUST OUT

In no particular order:

Ballard, J.G.	Crystal World, High-Rise, and The Unlimited Dream
Bear, Greg	Queen of Angels and Tangents
Bear, Greg	Darwin's Radio
Bellamy, Edward	Looking Backward: 2000-1887
Blish, James	A Case of Conscience
Bova, Ben	Return to Mars
Brin, David	Foundation's Triumph
Carmody, Isobelle	Obernewtyn
Clement, Hal	Half Life
Constantine, Storm	Crown of Silence
del Rey, Lester	The Best of Lester del Rey
Derleth, August	The Quest for Cthulhu
Gardner, James Alan	Hunted
Gibson, William	Mona Lisa Overdrive and Burning Chrome)
Gibson, William	Neuromancer
Goldstein, Lisa	Dark Cities Underground
Gotlieb, Phyllis	Violent Stars
Haldeman, Joe	Mindbridge
Harrison, Harry	West of Eden
Haydon, Elizabeth	Prophecy
Haydon, Elizabeth	Rhapsody
Herbert, Frank	The Dosadi Experiment and The Jesus Incident
Joyce, Graham	Dark Sister
Kerr, Katharine, & Kate Daniel	Polar City Nightmare
King, Stephen	The Stand: Complete & Uncut
Kress, Nancy	Probability Moon
Leiber, Fritz	The Wanderer
Malzberg, Barry N.	In the Stone House
Martin, George R.R.	A Storm of Swords
McCarthy, Wil	The Collapsium
Piercy, Marge	Woman On the Edge of Time
Robinson, Kim Stanley	A Short, Sharp Shock
Rowling, J.K.	Harry Potter and the Doomspell Tournament
Rucker, Rudy	Realware
Schmitz, James H.	T'n'T: Telzey & Trigger
Schwartz, Julius, & Brian M. Thomsen	My Life in Science Fiction, Comics
Silverberg, Robert	Lord Prestimion
Smith, Cordwainer	Norstrilia
Steele, Allen	Clarke County, Space
Straub, Peter	Magic Terror: Seven Tales
Thomas, Sheree R., ed.	Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora
Wells, Martha	Wheel of the Infinite
Williams, Sean, & Shane Dix	Evergence II: The Dying Light
Yolen, Jane	Sister Emily's Lightship and Other Stories
Zelazny, Roger	This Immortal



You can influence game manufacturers

Comments tells manufacturers what you want and sales makes sure you get it

By Kevin Davies

Many game players have come up with at least one idea for an alternate rule or a description of a person, place, thing, or adventure, that either builds or alters the original product.

This is, in part, due to the personal knowledge and life-experience of the player relative to that of the game designer and the broad market segment that the game was originally designed to appeal to.

I believe this should be encouraged.

It's one of the things that makes games great — they can inspire players to acts of personal creativity.

I would guess that many game designers started out this way — I know I did — writing adventures or wargame and miniatures scenarios, creating characters and artifacts, producing alternate rules, then sharing them with others.

In return, I received the feedback necessary to improve my creations and enhance the experience of those using them.

While most gamers don't attempt to earn a living designing games, their opinions and ideas can still influence the content of a work-in-progress at a game manufacturer.

Comments count

As a designer and manufacturer of games, I'm always thrilled whenever I receive an email or letter from someone who has enjoyed playing one of my creations.

Even more gratifying is to receive comments, suggestions, or requests for specific game elements, settings, or rules. Not only does this indicate that the game has inspired their creativity, but it has motivated them to submit their ideas.

This may not seem like a big deal.

However, that person's comments may have a huge impact on what form and direction a project actually takes. The creative process does not operate in a vacuum. Feedback is essential — especially when it comes to producing creative works that are ultimately offered to the marketplace.

Of course, every manufacturer has a schedule of projects under development. However, unlike the production of a widget in a factory, the content of a creative project isn't fixed until the final edit. Depending on how far along the project is in the production process, there is often room to accommodate a really desirable suggestion or request.

If the comments you make are clear and concise, there is a good chance that they may influence the thinking of the designer and ultimately the product you see on the shelves.

Your money matters

We get the products we pay for.

If you purchase good products (i.e., written in a clear and entertaining style, carefully edited, creatively and cleanly designed), the producers will take the effort to develop more products of a similar quality. If you buy crap, you're sending a message that crap is what you're willing to settle for.

If you buy crap, you're sending a message that crap is what you're willing to settle for. Eventually, it's all you'll see.

Eventually, it's all you'll see. This isn't rocket science; it is, however, how the marketplace works.

At one time, not so long ago, many of those creating and publishing games were devoted gamers themselves, driven by a personal vision to share their creation with others — often with little, if any, financial gain.

Today, larger corporations dominate the industry and much has changed. Many companies today produce games like widgets. A product is announced, "talent" is hired to develop it to strict criteria, production schedules and marketing plans are adhered to, and the product is released, accompanied by a campaign of hype to stimulate sales. A strong advertising campaign will produce sales for a bad product — people are often willing to buy something that looks or sounds "cool."

However, if the product ultimately tanks due to crummy content, the company simply writes it off and moves on to the next "big thing."

This is how the film industry, and most other large creative industries work.

The dollars you spend encourage the types of games produced. If you only buy products produced by large companies, and don't actively seek out those of smaller companies, the small companies will wither and die.

Why should you care? Small manufacturers tend to produce more eclectic, "out-there" designs — this applies to any industry. Sure, some may be awful, but many are gems, waiting to be discovered. If you fail to seek out these excellent, harder-to-find games, you may not have the option in the near future.

Markets are consolidat-

Continued on page 69

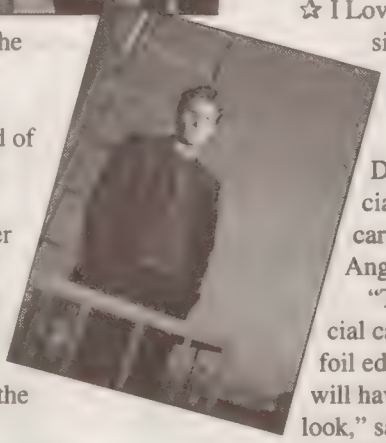
For fans, Inkworks' latest series is heaven-sent

By Nicholson

Even before the first episode of Angel was broadcast, Inkworks was already getting requests for cards based on the David Boreanaz character and the other characters who inhabit the vampire's world.

Those requests will be fulfiled come Aug.16 when the North Carolina-based company releases Angel: Season One.

The release will mark the end of a six-month-long process which begins with a meeting to determine what the series should offer from an editorial standpoint. From there, Inkworks personnel begin the task of selecting the proper images to reflect the episode and provide a recap of the season.



The series will provide a strong follow-up to Inkworks' five different Buffy The Vampire Slayer card series.

"For us, it was a natural," explains Martha Modlin, executive vice president of Inkworks. "We have been very successful with the Buffy series and as soon as we found out that Angel was spinning off we wanted to makes sure we did a series on him.

"There's a very loyal fan base for Angel that came off of Buffy .I think the grittier, more grown-up feeling of Angel has been successful bringing fans from Buffy as well as bringing a new audience to the show and to collecting trading cards,

The 90-card base set will include episode coverage from the show's premiere season including subsets such as Demon Compendium, The Women of Angel, Wolfram and Hart and Angel Investigations.

"The series is a good recap of season one," said Modlin. "It has a good selection coverage and gives you a chance to relive some of your favourite episodes in print."

To add to the collectibility of the series, Inkworks has also compiled four different subsets that will be randomly inserted in packs.

The bonus cards include:

☆ Dark Avenger — A nine card foil puzzle of Angel and his friends;

☆ I Love LA — a set of six foil cards featuring Cordelia;

☆ Warrior's Destiny — a special foil-etched card that explores Angel's mission.

"This is one special card that has a foil edge to it, so it will have a unique look," said Modlin.

☆ Autograph cards signed by David Boreanaz, Glenn Quinn, Elizabeth Rohm, James Marsters, Alexis Denisof and Christian Kane.

"We have a lot of good characters and people are going to be excited about getting their autograph," Modlin noted. "There's a lot in terms of collectibility and interest for fans."

Plans for a second series are already under way even though the season hasn't begun.

For collectors purchasing a complete box, there's an added bonus — a special box-loader promo card for the next series.

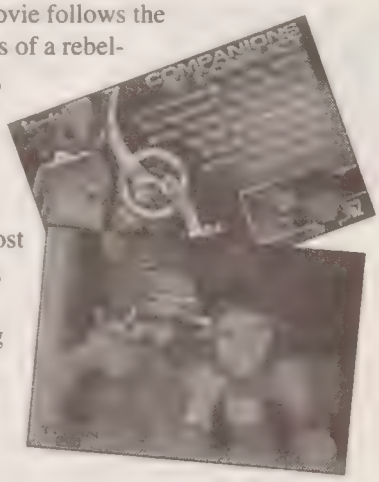
"So we're already getting people interested in season two," said Modlin.

Angel: Season One is packed seven cards per pack, 36 packs per box. he suggested retail price will be $1.99 per pack (US).

Card News

Titan AE gets 90-card series

Inkworks has released a series of trading cards based on the 20th Century Fox movie, Titan AE.

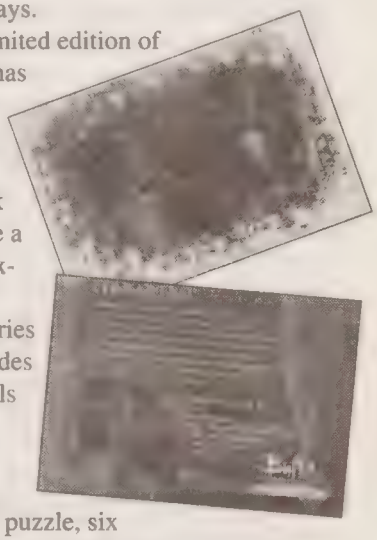


The movie follows the adventures of a rebellious teen, Cale, who sets off in search of the long lost spaceship, Titan. According to legend, the ship has the ability to allow mankind to defeat the Drej and rebuild the human race.

The 90-card series covers the entire movie. In addition, it also includes a nine-card foil puzzle that covers a variety of effects from the movie, six monochrome die-cut cards and a spectra etched foil die-cut of the Titan.

Remember Buffy's high school days

Inkworks has added to its popular Buffy series with Reflections: The High School Days.

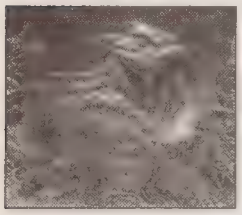


The limited edition of 72 cards has been produced on canvas card stock to provide a unique texture.

The series also includes three levels of bonus cards including an all-foil puzzle, six foil and die-cut cards and a series of autographs.

Secrets now easier to keep

Keepers of Forbidden Lore will be able to keep their secrets in style with the release of Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu Keeper's Screen.



The new three-panel Keeper's Screen is jam-packed with vital GM information presented in any easy to use at a glance format.

The player's side of the screen features Philippe Caza artwork worthy of its own sanity check. This product includes a new introductory scenario perfect for beginning investigators and keepers alike, as well as three four-page game aids (weapons table with an alien weapons section, a new four-page summary of rule book spells and some character sheet masters to jump-start your game).

The game has a suggested retail price of $14.95 US and is scheduled for a July 24 release.

White Wolf's summer releases

Georgia-based White Wolf has announced a heady list of games, components and other related items for release during the second half of the summer and into the fall.

In July: Clan Novel: Tremere, Kane of Old Mars, The Ashen Thief, Blood Treachery and Hunter Book: Judges.

In August: Predator & Prey: Vampire, Clanbook: Toreador, World of Rage, Aberrant:ReignofEvil.com, Truth Until Paradox, World of Darkness Character Generator CD-ROM and MET Journal.

In September: Clan Novel: Nosferatu, Lankhmar: Fafrhd and the Grey Mouser (vol. 1), Hunter Apocrypha, Vampire Clan Tattoos, Predator & Prey: Judge, Clan Novel Anthology, Vampire Flask, Clanbook: Ventrue, Wind from East: Mongols, Dragons of the East, Aberrant: Worldwide Phase 2, Deluxe Bk of Nod and Kithbook: Redcaps.

GAMING NEWS

Decipher releases new Star Wars set

Decipher is releasing Death Star II, the eighth expansion for the Star Wars Customizable Card Game, in July.

Emperor Palpatine and Luke Skywalker, Jedi Knight, the two most powerful cards in the game, will finally be available to fans.

These two new cards are considered "ultra rare" and truly define the difference between the Dark Side and Light Side of the Force

This set is delivered in 11-card expansion packs and introduces preconstructed Starter Decks in both Light and Dark Side variations.

The new decks make Death Star II an outstanding entry point for new players. Each deck comes with 60 cards, a simplified rules booklet and a rare card exclusive to that deck: Admiral Ackbar for the Light Side and Admiral Piett for the Dark Side.

another desouza

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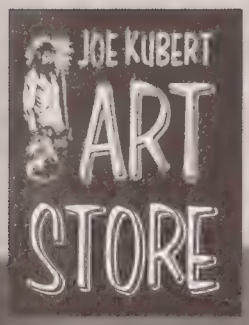

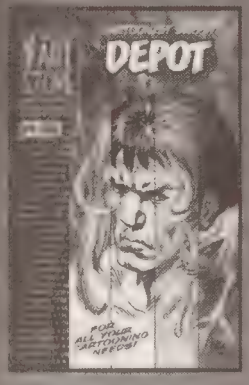

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An old-fashioned guy with old-fashioned tastes

Skimming through a batch of tapes reminds me why I love anime — at least, anime done right

By Emru Townsend

There are times when I think my tastes in anime are relatively old-fashioned. Ask me to name my favourites in any category and you'll likely hear about Wings of Honneamise, Laputa: Castle in the Sky, or Mobile Suit Gundam, all products of the 1980s (the first Gundam series started a little earlier, but it's close enough to count). I simply have a harder time getting into the more recent stuff. My columns, I think, have reflected that.

There are times when I wonder if I just lean toward my personal age of discovery; while I'd been watching translated anime since childhood, it wasn't until 1986 that I became aware of its Japanese origins and started devouring everything I could.

However, while skimming through some old tapes one day, I hit on the real reason I favour that era.

The anime world went through a number of changes in the '80s (or, to be more exact, 1982 to 1992); to name but two, OAVs (Original Animation Videos, direct-to-video titles) were exploding onto the market, and the works of luminaries such as Rumiko Takahashi (Urusei Yatsura, Ranma Ω), Hayao Miyazaki (Nausic‰a of the Valley of Wind, Laputa: Castle in the Sky), Katsuhiro Otomo (Akira) and Shirow Masamune (Black Magic M-66, Dominion) were arriving on TV, the big screen, and video.

Although it may seem unremarkable now, Super Dimension Fortress Macross is legendary for many reasons.

Anime was a vast playground, and companies, eager to fill it up, were willing to experiment to see what would catch on.

Since then. not much has excited me.

The Japanese economy isn't the powerhouse it used to be, and markets aren't what they once were, and the subsequent belt-tightening has led to a certain degree of caution. Theatrical anime seems to have been hit the hardest, and what's left there and on the small screen echoes the creatively stifled North American entertainment world, dominated as it is by merchandise-driven shows, sequels, spinoffs, and other derivations of existing popular properties. Other titles offer up elements which seem calculated to push fan buttons: transformation scenes, gratuitous (and ever-increasing) breasts, and so on.

Of course, not everything

Continued on page 68

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traying characters such as the Prince and LaCroix. The two, and a number of others during his career, offer the latitude for Bennett to overplay.

"I do like to underplay, to go the not obvious way," Bennett explained. "I could go over the top if I want to, but that's the easy and obvious way.

"I'd rather pull it back and make people think and wonder a little bit."

The high-profile and "quirky" roles provide a juxtaposition from other characters Bennett has taken on during the past 14 years.

"I do a lot of boring stuff," Bennett explained. "Where you play the local sheriff or detective or lawyer or whatever. They are not very interesting characters. But it's what you do with it.

"But there's a lot of truth to the saying, there are no small parts only small actors.' You can do a lot with a role if you want to."

Nearly six years since Forever Knight ceased production, Bennett is still amazed at fans' reactions.

"It was a wonderful surprise for all of us when Forever Knight became that popular in its own little cult way," Bennett says. "

While there's been talk of a Forever Knight movie since the series left the air, Bennett says the probability of fans' wishes coming true are slim.

Ironically, for actors who play undead beings, the reason is simply the passage of time.

"All of us are getting older," Bennett says. "I just think that the longer it goes, the less likely it's going to happen.

"I just get the feeling that that's it."

☆

WATCH LEXX ON SPACE: THE IMAGINATION STATION

Rusch, as well as sf classics by Heinlein and Silverberg.

Then there's **GalaxyOnline.**

If you've checked it before and thought that they had better intentions than results, it's time to have another look. This very impressive and ambitious site has a new animated intro, excellent media coverage, streaming video and even a writer's corner featuring a mish-mash of opinions from the many of the most opinionated old-school sf writers like Harlan Ellison and Ben Bova.

The retro look is lots of fun, but this site is hard to look at on a small screen and even a bit cluttered on a large one. Once they learn the lesson that less is more, this has the potential to become one of the best sites on the web.

With the rate things are changing, a whole new set of cutting edge sites will have gone online by the time I write the next column. I'm going to keep my eye open and report back if I find anything new or particularly bold and exciting.

Tips and suggestions gratefully accepted at dalesal@interlog.com.

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Dale Sproule is a Toronto writer, artist, editor and web-meister. He founded and edited the first 11 issues of TransVersions with his wife Sally McBride. His Aurora nominations include two for fiction, three for art and five for editing. He is currently writing screenplays and designing websites, including his current online graphic novel project, Razorwings, http://www.razorwings.com

ing, distribution and retail channels are becoming more restrictive with retailers demanding more "best-sellers" and are less willing to "educate" their customers about quality products or nurture products that don't have the huge advertising budget to "sell themselves." You may have noted that there are more products today based on popular film and TV shows. This sort of cross-market "branding," while seemingly "cool" is actually the death-knell of original creativity.

Your purchases today will determine the games you play tomorrow.

What you can do

Finding the best of anything usually requires some effort. Many large companies spend more on their marketing budgets than on the creation of their products. Consider this when seeking information about what is available.

Those of you with access to the internet have a direct line to many smaller publishers and designers. Most will gladly answer questions, provide requested information, and even include your gaming group as playtesters for works-in-progress.

Reviews, adventures, and other material are often available free online. If you can't obtain a product through a local retailer, most small manufacturers will help you get a copy.

The gaming industry is undergoing a period of extreme change. Outside pressures such as electronic games, media tie-ins, and limited distributor and retail support are pushing the industry towards the maximization of short-term profits over quality creativity.

Only you, through the choices and comments you make, can influence things toward the way you would like to see them.

Kevin Davies is a publisher, game designer and illustrator. His company Peregrine produces the humorous roleplay games Murphy's World and Bolt, Lord of Evil and can be reached at peregrine@peregrine-net.com or http://www.peregrine-net.com

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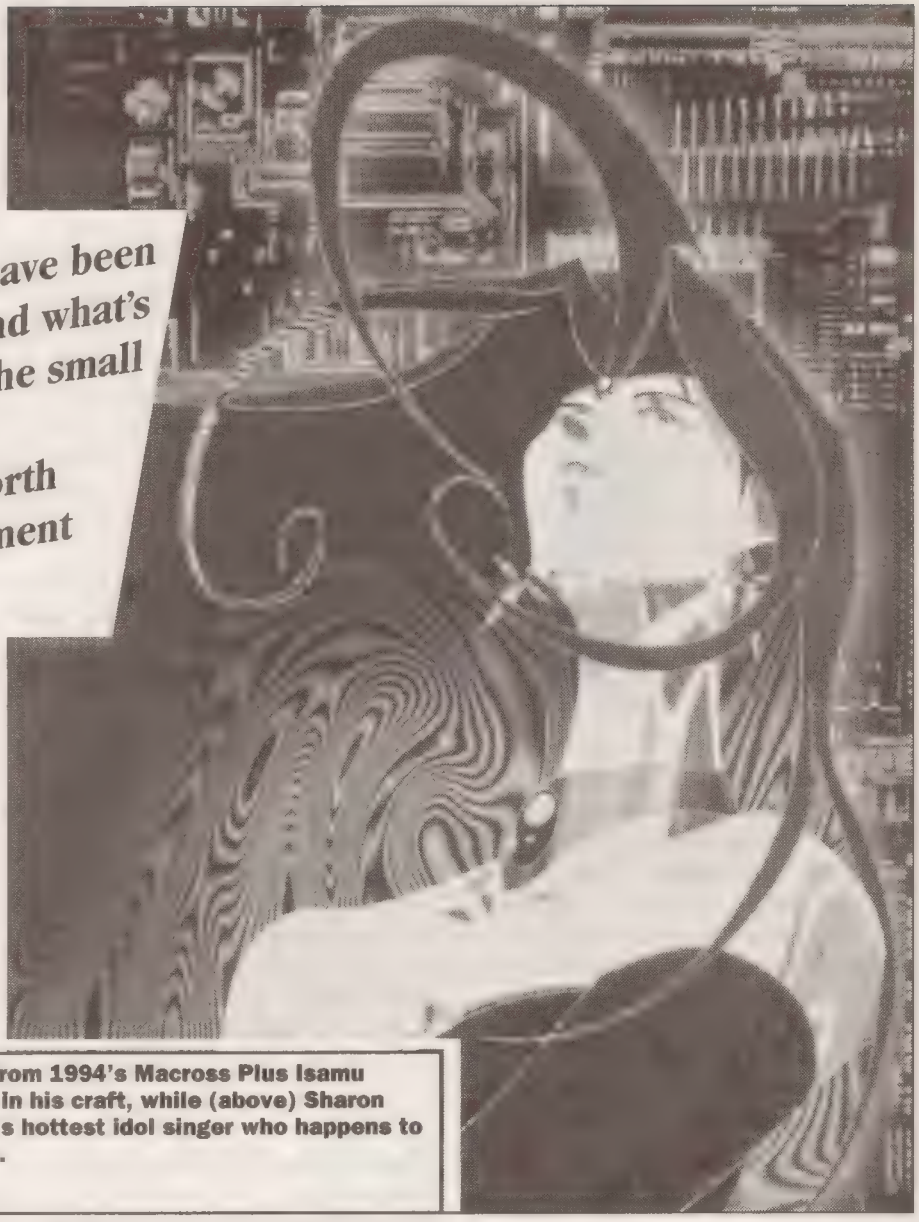
was better back in the old days, nor is everything new necessarily bad. But there's definitely been a shift, and it's worth a look to see how the eras, if such they are, measure up.

Over the course of the next few columns, I'll be exploring notable titles of the past and their updated counterparts, as well as looking at some of the more interesting releases of the last few years.

Theatrical anime seems to have been hit the hardest, and what's left there and on the small screen echoes the creatively stifled North American entertainment world



(Opposite page) From 1994's Macross Plus Isamu Dyson is airborne in his craft, while (above) Sharon Apple, the galaxy's hottest idol singer who happens to be entirely virtual.

☆ ☆ ☆

Super Dimension Fortress Macross made its debut on Japanese television in 1982. Although it may seem unremarkable — little more than giant transforming robots whaling the tar out of each other —the series is legendary to anime fans in the East and West for very good reasons.

Set in the near future (actually, the series starts in

From Page 8

very inception," said David Nordhaus, CFO and senior editor at DarkTales Publications.

DarkTales books that are immediately available at **www.bookface.com**, include: Scary Rednecks & Other Inbred Horrors, by David Whitman and Weston Ochse; Deadtimes, by Yvonne Navarro; Clickers, by J.F. Gonzalez and Mark Williams; Eternal Sunset, by Sephera Giron; In Memoriam, by Mort Castle; Demonesque, by Steven Lee Climer; The Asylum, edited by Victor Heck; and Secret Life of Colors, by Steve Savile.

More Nebulous Matter

Jackson finds home with sci-fi productions

Toronto-based actor Andrew Jackson (profiled in Parsec Spring 2000), has been landing roles in other Canadian sci-fi productions.

This spring he landed the role of Hebron/Tanith for an epsiode of Stargate, as well as a part in a recently completed episode of Relic Hunter.

Battlefield Earth may have been laid low by critics, but a 30-foot version of Terl still manages to stay inflated outside of the Pizzeria Uno in Chicago.

1999), Macross's key ingredients were interstellar war (with, yes, plenty of big robots blowing each other up); a central love triangle; and music, in the form of idol singer, Lynn Minmay. (For the unitiated, Japanese idol singers are young pop stars of varying talent who often quickly achieve white-hot celebrity status before completely falling off the pop-culture map. The Spice Girls could be considered idol singers, but they've been famous a little too long.)

Oh, and those robots? Following in the footsteps of Mobile Suit Gundam, Macross's transforming robots (Valkyries) were actually standard-issue fighter planes, rather than the privilege of a single heroic figure. There was even a semi-plausible reason given for them: the enemy's 60-foot robots weren't robots at all, they were powered armor for the alien Zentraedi, who were 10-times our size.

The key to Macross's appeal was that the series placed the soap opera of young pilot Hikaru Ichijo's life —especially his relationship with Minmay and ranking officer Misa Hayase — at the forefront, using the war as a backdrop. The formula worked, and the show quickly became a hit, prompting the then-fledgling Studio Nue to create an additional nine episodes on top of the original 27.

As with most television series, the quality of the visuals could vary wildly, with the best efforts going to the most significant episodes. In particular, the first two episodes are masterpieces of design, direction, and pacing, using the "camera" in a way North American television animation has yet to match in the eighteen years since. In contrast, some of the later episodes feature some of the worst animation ever seen on TV. The story, however, works throughout, though it may test your threshold for melodrama.

There have been follow-ups to Macross; the summer of 1984 saw the theatrical release of Macross: Do You Remember Love?, a visually luscious two-hour adaptation of the series' events, and shortly thereafter was the Macross: Flashback 2012 OAV, which was essentially a collection of clips from the series and movie set to Minmay's music, along with footage of her, Hikaru, and Misa after the events of... the movie? The TV series?

One of the reasons Macross Plus is superior to earlier incarnations of Macross is the animosity between Isamu Dyson and Guld Goa Bowman.

It wasn't made clear, but it certainly intimated that more was to come.

Macross II and Macross 7 came and went, but it was 1994's Macross Plus which really captured the spirit of the original show. In many ways, it even improved on it.

Again, there's plenty of hi-tech transforming-fighter action, but the real story of this four-part OAV series is the triangle between childhood friends Isamu Dyson, Guld Goa Bowman, and Myung Fan Lone, who happen to find themselves on their home planet at the same time. Hotshot pilot Isamu, busted for reckless behavior in combat, finds himself as a test pilot for a new transforming fighter which might replace the UN Spacy's aging YF-19. Bowman is the test pilot for another fighter competing for the same spot. Both of them bear animosity toward each other for some reason involving Myung — and wouldn't you know it, she's back in town as the producer for Sharon Apple, the galaxy's hottest idol singer who happens to be entirely virtual.

Like its progenitor, Macross Plus features phenomenal animation work; however, without the deadlines and pressures of television animation, the entire series is a visual feast from start to finish.

Directed by Macross veteran Shoji Kawamori, Macross Plus features vertigo-inducing aerial sequences; slower-paced, elegantly staged scenes between Isamu, Bowman and Myung; and some of the most creatively applied computer animation to date.

The music, too, veers away from the cheesy pop-synth of '80s idol music and embraces more sophisticated arrangements, while the score, performed by the Israel Philharmonic, easily makes my top10 list of animation scores.

In a nutshell, Macross Plus is anime — actually, animation — done right.

☆ ☆ ☆

Macross was made available in English in adapted form as the first and most significant part of the Robotech TV series in 1985, which is difficult to find; AnimEigo plans a very limited release of Macross in the near future, available only to people who sign up at

Continued on page 73

Comics, cards, anime videos, toys, Pokémon, Dragonball Z, Sailor Moon, Star Wars

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X-Men open the superhero floodgates

By
Marie Marco

From all accounts the X-Men movie has the potential to be a summer blockbuster when it reaches theatres July 14.

After all, it features an all-star cast, special effects galore and a pre-existing audience thanks to almost 40 years worth of readers.

But, then again, there were those who said the same of Howard the Duck.

For all the secrecy surrounding the project, there were rumblings that the movie version may not sit well with some fans. The movie's trailer had fans nit-picking it to death.

Of course, complaining about the white hairpiece worn by the weather-controlling mutant, Storm, doesn't mean the movie is going to flush. But then again, it isn't the type of buzz studios need in the absence of high-profile media campaigns during the early part of the year.

But regardless of how the movie fares, the X-Men project seems to have opened the floodgates for other comic-book adaptations. There's a lot of them currently in various stages of production.

Of course, there's always talk about another Batman or Superman installment, but the next high-profile production should be based on Spider-man.

The adaptation once had James Cameron's interest, before he tired of waiting for the project to get the green light. Now, Sam Raimi is onboard as director and Nicholas Brendon from Buffy the Vampire Slayer is the latest actor rumoured for the lead role.

The Spider-Man movie has a reported start date of Dec. 4 and, if the schedule holds, should hit theatres during the second half of 2001.

During the tailend of 1999 and the early part of this year, Alan Moore's six-part comic The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen was a consistent top-seller in Canada and the United States.

Starman writer James Robinson has signed on to pen the screenplay for the movie version of the comic book. Robinson is currently working on a draft of the script, so the final product likely won't be in theatres until late 2001.

Sheena

The movie version of Ghost World starts filming this month. The movie will feature Thora Birch, Scarlett Johansson, Steve Buscemi and Bran Renfro.

The movie is scheduled for release next year.

During a recent book signing in California, author Neil Gaiman announced he will direct a movie version of his DC/Vertigo miniseries Death: The High Cost of Living.

While they're not destined for movie theatres, three projects are worthy of mention.

Baywatch vet Gena Lee Nolin is slated to play Sheena: Queen of the Jungle. The syndicated show began shooting in Orlando, Fla., in June.

Meanwhile, production on the Witchblade television movie has been completed and the project is now in post-production. Witchblade, based on the Top Cow Productions comic is scheduled for an October airdate.

The final project concerns the fabled blue defender of justice, The Tick.

The latest news has David Burke cast in the role of noble sidekick Arthur and production is set to go later this year.

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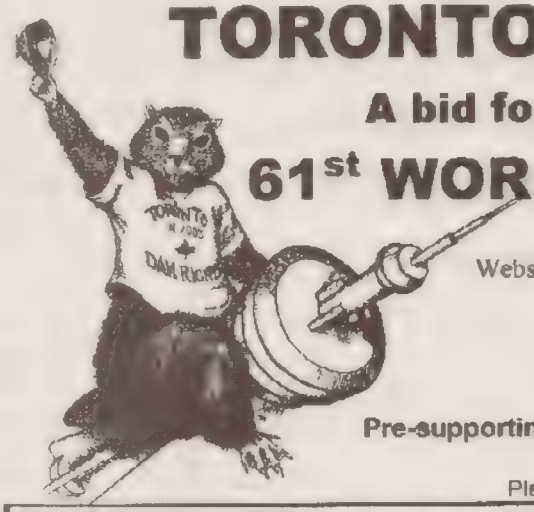

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Fall schedule

Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Pacific Time
6:00am	Highlander					Space News.	Canadian	3:00am
6:30am.						Twiglight zone	Document.	3:30am.
7:00am.	Ray Bradbury							4:00 am
7:30am.	Weird Science							4:30am.
8:00am.	Beast	Nowhere	Crow	Raven	VR5		Capt. Power	5:00am.
8:30am.	Master	Msn				movie	Elec. Play	5:30am.
9:00am.	War of the Worlds						Battlestar	6:00am.
9:30am							Galactica	6:30am
10am	Star Trek							7:00am
10:30am								7:30am
11:00am	Highlanders					Star Trek:		8:00am
11:30am						Next Generation		8:30a.m
Noon	Star Trek: Next Generation					Beast	Twilight Zone	9:00am
12:30pm						Master	Odyssey	9:30am
1:00pm	Quantum Leap				t	Star Trek:	Relic	10:00am
1:30pm						Voyager	Hunter	10:30am
2:00pm	Gene Roddenberry's							11:00am
2:30pm	Earth: Final Conflict					Movie	Movie	11:30am
3:00pm	Babylon 5							noon
3:30pm								12:30pm
4:00pm	Star Trek					The	Beyond	1:00pm
4:30pm						Visitor	Belief	1:30pm
5:00pm	Star Trek: Deep Space 9					Roswell	Space	2:00pm
5:30pm							Specials	2:30am
6:00pm	Highlander					Battlestar		3:00pm
6:30pm						Galactic	Beastmaster	3:30pm
7:00pm	Babylon 5					The Lost	Earth	4:00pm
7:30pm						World	Final Conflict	4:30pm
8:00pm	The	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Sliders	Relic		5:00pm
8:30pm	Visitor					Hunter	Movie	5:30pm
9:00pm	Seven	Level 9	First	Angel	Roswell.			6:00pm
9:30pm	Days		Wave			Movie		6:30pm
10:00pm	Star Trek: Voyage							7:00pm
10:30pm							movie	7:30pm
11:00pm	X-Files							8:00pm
11:30pm								8:30pm
midnight						Movie	Harsh	9:00pm
12:30am							Realm	9:30pm
1:00am	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie		Good vs.	10:00pm
1:30am						Harsh	Evil	10:30pm
2:00am	X-Files					Realm		11:00pm
2:30am								11:30pm
3:00am	Babylon 5					Good vs.	Paranormal	midnight
3:30am						Evil	prog.	12:30am
4:00am	Star Trek: Voyage							1:00am
4:30am						American		1:30am
5:00am	Deep Space Nine					Gothic		2:00am
5:30am								2:30am

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AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 4

CHICON 2000 — World Science Fiction Convention: Hyatt Regency Chicago, Ill. Scheduled guests:Ben Bova, Jim Baen, Bob Eggleton, Harry Turtledove. Registration: Members Attending $135 US, Supporting $40 US. Information: PO Box 642057, Chicago, IL, 60664, chi2000@chicon.org or http://www.chicon.org/

SEPTEMBER 8-10

Anime USA 2000: Holiday Inn Rosslyn Westpark at Key Bridge, Arlington, Va. Scheduled guest: Steven Bennett IV. Registration: $20 (US) per person preregistration. Information: WWW.ANIME-USA.COM or SASE to Anime USA, 7395-B Lee Highway, Falls Church, Va., 22042

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OCTOBER 13-15

Con*cept Boreal: Days Inn, Guy St., Montreal.Scheduled guests: Charles de Lint, Yanick Paquette, Larry Stewart. Registration: $30 until Sept. 15, $35 at the door. Information: www.ConceptSF.com, jp.normand@sympatico.ca or PO Box 405, Station H, Montreal, H3G 2L1.

OCTOBER 26-29

26th World Fantasy Convention: Omni Bayfront Hotel, Corpus Christi, TX. Scheduled guests: K.W. Jeter, John Crowley. Registration NA. Information: PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755, fduartejr@aol.com.

NOVEMBER 17-19

Philcon 200: Adam's Mark Hotel, Philadelphia, Pa. Scheduled guests: Poul Anderson, Vernor Vinge, Bob Walters. Registration: NA. Information: info @philcon.org, www.philcon.org, (215) 604) 3980 or PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, Pa., 19101-8303.

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JANUARY 20-21

Pandemonium 18: Day's Inn, 30 Carleton St., Toronto, Ont. Registration: $20 preregistered weekend gaming, $25 at door; $5 visitors passes at the door. Information: www.megacity-one.com/panda, Hugh Montgomerie@sony.ca

APRIL 20-22

EerieCon Three: Days Inn Riverview, Niagara Falls, NY. Scheduled guests: Robert J. Sawyer, Carolyn Clink, Samuel R. Delany. Registration: $30 until March 15, $40 at the door. Information: www.geocities.com/area51/9159, www.scificspace.com/html/eeriecon.html, email to eeriecon@juno.com or by mail to P.O. Box 412, Buffalo, NY 14226

MAY 25-28

Costume Con 19: Westin Hotel, Calgary, Alta. Scheduled Guests: TBA; Registration: NA. Information: Box 20001, Bow Valley Postal Outlet, 205-5th Ave SW, Calgary, Alta., T2P 4H3 or capsam@nucleus.com.

AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 3

Millennium Philcon: Pennsylvania Convention Centre and Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Scheduled guests: Greg Bear, Gardner Dozois, Stephen Youll. Registration: $145 new attending;$90 convert. Information: www,phil2001.org, www.netaxs.com/~phil2001.

Parsec is not responsibile for changes in hotels, guests, prices, dates or cancellations. It is the sole responsibility of convention organizers to provide this information.

Manga Entertainment released Macross Plus in both subtitled and dubbed formats on four VHS cassettes and, more recently, on a two-DVD set.

Townsend

(from page 68

their Web site (**http://www.animeigo.com**). Manga Entertainment released Macross Plus in both subtitled and dubbed formats on four VHS cassettes and, more recently, on a two-DVD set. (Unlike most dubbed anime, Macross Plus's voice work is stellar; until Princess Mononoke, I considered it to be the best anime dub ever released.) There's also a Macross Plus movie, a compressed and adapted version of the series, available on VHS.

Emru Townsend wishes he had a transforming fighter plane. He can be reached via email at emru@pobox.com

Our Sources

These are the people we turn to for information about comic books in Canada. If you have a question or are looking for a hard-to-find back issue, give them a call.

NOVA SCOTIA
Kevin Sauder
Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games
79 Alderney Dr.
Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7
(902) 466-8884

Richard Sturk
Webslingers
Halifax Shopping Centre
Halifax B3C 2H8
(902) 455-4949

NEW BRUNSWICK
Derek Nichols
Strange Adventures Comic Books
384 Queen St.
Fredericton, E3B 1B2
(506) 450-3759

Dino
Halley's Comics
25 Charlotte St.
Saint John, E2L 2H3
(506) 693-4835

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Jeff Smith
The Comic Hunter
173 Queen St.
Charlottetown, C1A 4B4
(902) 566-2926

QUEBEC
Ace Lopes
Empire Comics
1221 Crescent St.
Montreal, H3G 2B1
(514) 871-1402

ONTARIO
Jody Keebler
Big B Comics
1045 James St.
Hamilton, L8K 1B4
(905) 318-9636

Debbie & Gordon Frew
Triple Play Cards and Comics
18025 Yonge St.
Newmarket, L8Y 8C9
(905) 853-2273

Brad Hayes
Comics North
106 Elm St.
Sudbury, P3C 1T5
(705) 674-1015

Stephanie Hunter
Silver Snail
367 Queen St. W.
2374 Yonge St.
391 Bank St.
Toronto
(416) 593-0889

MANITOBA
Darren Thomas,
Will Sylvester
Comic Cave
1104 Corydon Ave
Winnipeg,
(204) 284-2210

SASKATCHEWAN
Pat Thompson
8th street Books & Comics
1010 8th Street East
Saskatoon, S7H 0R9
(306) 343-6624

Gerry Macdonald
Phoenix Comics &Books
2806 Dewdney Ave.
Regina S4T 0X7
(306) 757-9091

ALBERTA
Wes Wong
Gerald Garcia
Comic-Kazi
Northland Village Shops
Calgary, P2L 2J8
(403) 286-0544

Craig
Saturn Comics
5726 104 St.
Edmonton, T6N 2K2
(780) 430-0598

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Skip or Robin
The Book & Comic Emporium
1247 Granville St.
Vancouver, V6Z 1M5
(604) 682-3019

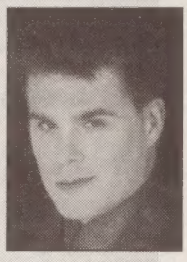
Steve
Up-Start Comics & Games
1483 A Bowen Rd.
Nanaimo, V9S 1G4
(250) 741-0101

Who's Who

Isaac Szpindel is an author, screenwriter, electrical engineer and a neurologist. His short story, By Its Cover, will be appearing this fall in the Wonder Zone trilogy; another story, Patterns, was recently selected as a finalist in the Writer's of the Future contest. His professional screen credits include the upcoming feature film, Dark Matter, commissioned by Emmy-award-winning Associated Producers.

Isaac is executive producer of the animated short, Hoverboy, a partner in Infinite Monkey Productions, and is currently developing several projects for print, film and television. In addition to the scientific publications to his credit, Isaac maintains a small medical practice, is an accomplished public speaker, an occasional lecturer at the University of Toronto and a frequent guest and panelist at various SF cons. He is a founding member of the WEdge writer's group and a member of the Ink*Specs writer's circle.

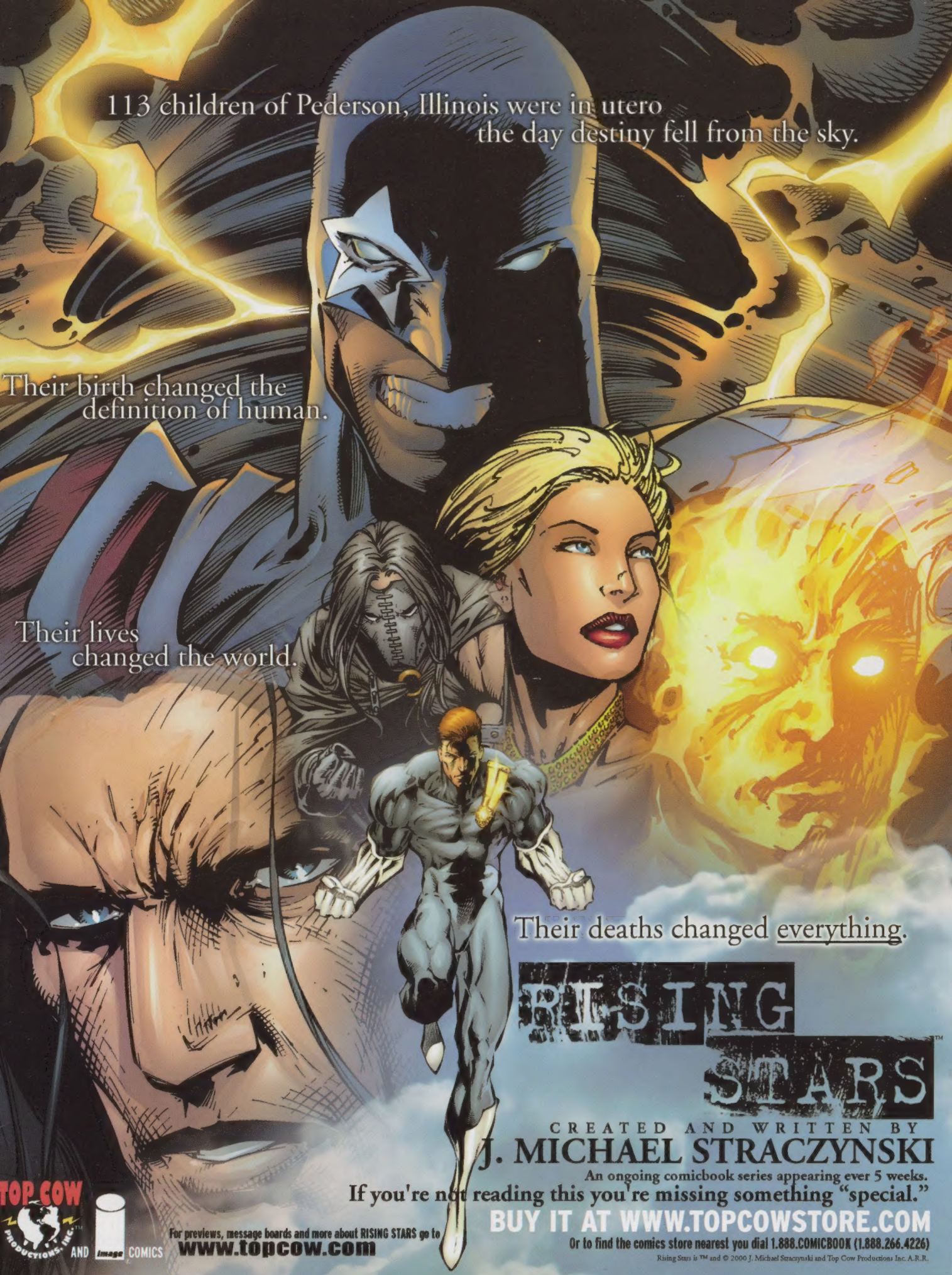
Eugene Wesley Roddenberry Jr., also known as Rod, was born into a family empire that is adored by legions of devoted fans worldwide. He is the son of legendary science-fiction creator, Gene Roddenberry, who's television series, Star Trek and Earth: Final Conflict, changed the face of television. His father created television series that went beyond just science fiction entertainment, they were conduits for the transfer of information and playgrounds for intellectual thought. Eugene is definitely his father's son — he shares his father's passionate views on the world and humanity. He is a down-to-earth young man who truly believes that one day everyone will peacefully co-exist regardless of race, creed or culture.



As the technical advisor for Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict Eugene's job is to provide advise on how to better merge the "Gene Roddenberry philosophy" into each story. He is also there to provide useful commentary and suggestions on continuity and story matter on each and every outline, script and revision that are generated by the creative writing team. This position also offers him the opportunity to work with his mother, Majel, who is one of the executive producers on the show and also plays the role of Dr. J. Belman.

Richard Reeve was born in London and educated at the University of London and the The University of Greenwich, London He spent time in tangier and Andalusia (Spain) as a tutor. He was an internationally established author having been published in Great Britain, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Canada, the United States and Australia. His work has been broadcast by the BBC. He won first place in the British Diversity Awards 1997 Short Story Competition.

Jean-Pierre Normand is one of the foremost science fiction and fantasy artists in Canada. His work has appeared in such publications as Canadian Geographic, Parsec and the upcoming Wonder Zone.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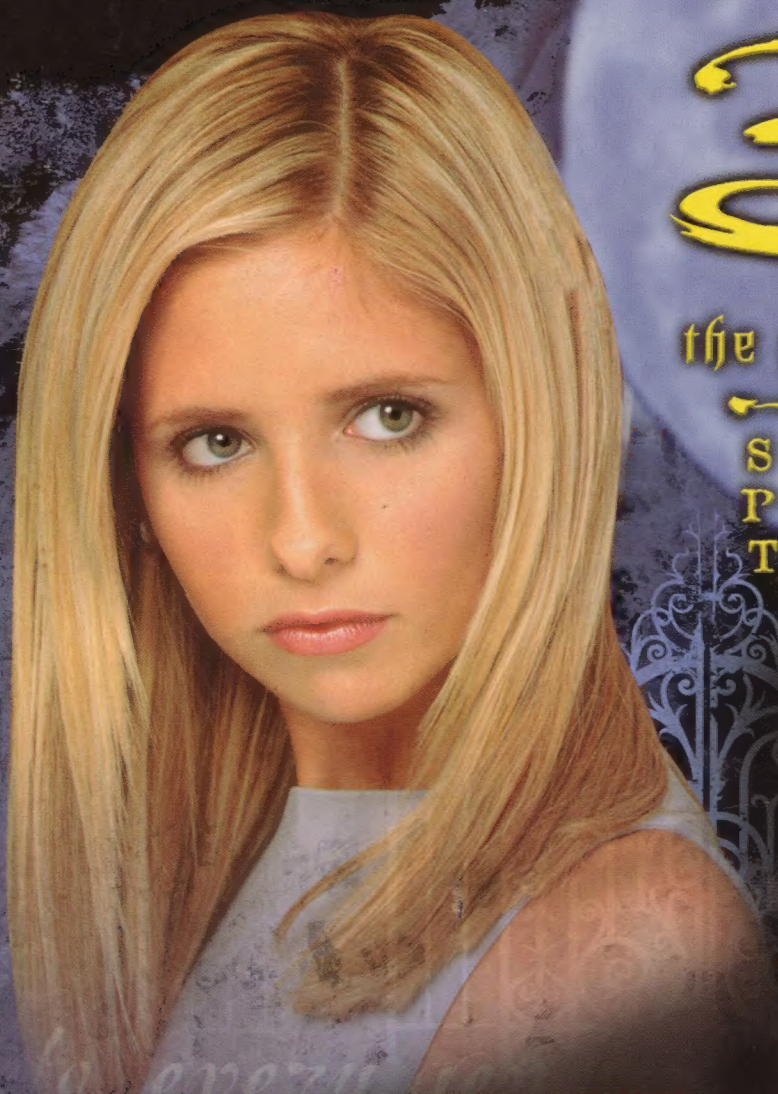

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